

STORY OF SIMLA

BY
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DEWAN'S PUBLICATIONS
LAHORE

*Printed by Gopal Singh at the Punjab Electric Press, Lahore,
and published by Dewan Ram Parkash, Lahore.*



Azad and Nehru at Simla

My thanks are due to Messrs.
R. I. Paul, Hiralal Seth and
Madan Gopal who helped me
one way or the other in
compiling this book.

AUTHOR

CONTENTS

By Way of Introduction	9
I. Solid Rock of Unity	13
II. The Leaders Meet	25
III. Azad Plays Fair	40
IV. Jinnah Again	52
V. League in True Colours	62
VI. Bone of Contention	78
VII. The Bubble Bursts	88
VIII. Election Stunt	105
IX. Cynosure of All Eyes	110
X. What Next ?	118
Appendix	127

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

What should be the introduction to a book in which leading luminaries and 'darkies' (creating darkness, though not necessarily dark in physical appearance) speak out their mind (having assembled at a conference table, of which this book purports to be a record) on the Wavell Plan? It would be well if we take up some biographical sketches of the luminaries and the other gentlemen, and refresh our memory after having read the book or before beginning it (*see Appendix*).

Could these gentlemen frame by themselves the destiny of the millions of India? No. Impressive as the galaxy of the names is, there are many elements that are missing. It has been more or less a premiers' conference. I should not be surprised if instead of discussing the new constitution for India, these gentlemen had discussed with Wavell as to how best the premiers could give aid in war against Japan, without infringing the substance of Congress resolutions.

What kind of constitution shall then we have? And which body wou'd frame it? Written constitutions elaborated in detail are no good. The British have been trying to get rid of the House of Lords since 1644 or even before that in the days of Good Queen Elizabeth; they fought two revolutions, killed one king, fought in streets of Britain and London in 1817 against armed forces of the State, they passed reforms act and curtailed the powers of the Lords but they have not abolished them so far. If they do it now it would perhaps be as much creditable as the winning of the war against the Axis.

However, this is *their* job. We had better see that we don't make any such blithering mistake. Our Elders

(members of the Council of State) waste the time of their constituents enough. Let us not repeat that mistake.

The constitution should then grow up. Let the regime of the people be established first.

In this connection the League is not the only hurdle in the way of achievement of our goal. There are Princes to be reckoned with and we have also to consider that should we get what we want by way of transference of reserved subjects at centre it will not be that with coming into power in Britain of a government in any way different from the present (it looks well set for the present anyhow) we will have to bear its hourly threats or be persistently browbeaten by it as the people of Eire are. Only in one way could the present negotiations be said to have improved the affairs, and that is that personal contact has been established between British representative and representatives of the people and those who pose themselves as that. With Amery being removed from office, the Viceroy could, if he so disposed, make the task of the British Secretary for Indian affairs easier (and with it that of the Parliament) to introduce desired reform in India.

In the presence of Congress readiness and willing co-operation and such spirit of constructive contribution towards helping India's progress on its path of freedom, no Government, whose head in India claims to be 'sincere friend' of India, can keep any member of that organisation under laws and ordinances which were made to meet a particular situation at the outbreak of war. That situation has definitely changed and Lord Wavell and Provincial Governors know by now more definitely than ever before the Congress attitude towards war against Japan.

Political circles, therefore, hold that in spite of the conference having failed (and this failure is due to the obduracy and obstinacy of one man and not due to the

Congress attitude) Lord Wavell should, without any further delay, order the release of all political prisoners behind the prison bars under the Central Government's orders and ask all provincial governments to do likewise, so that there may prevail a more friendly atmosphere in India. This is how he may be able best to help India after the failure of the conference.

"It is not difficult to realise what a tremendous disappointment the Simla Conference's failure might have caused to the families of thousands of Congressmen, who are still behind the prison bars," said a prominent Congress leader in the course of a talk to pressmen. This leader is particularly interested in the welfare of the distressed families of those in jail and of those still hiding.

He spoke with a feeling and made another characteristic observation: "How does the failure of the conference affect Mr. Jinnah in any way? He does not feel the pinch of the distress which thousands of the families are suffering today. If nothing else, the establishment of national government in India would have meant, at least, the immediate release of all political prisoners and the rekindling of light in the homes which have remained dark ever since 1942 and would have brought a new hope to the homes where hearths have not been lighted during these several days."

Obviously the release of political prisoners is an important factor in the British foreign policy and the internal policy of the representative of Britain in India.

So far as the intransigence of Jinnah is concerned it is bad enough. But the writer has made extensive study of the past performances of this gentleman, and embodied the results in a fairly large number of articles contributed from time to time in various periodicals. I have no doubt that Jinnah could be satisfied with much less than what he wants. As for his talk about general elections, he is very much mistaken if he thinks that Moslem masses

are as pliable as the middle classes and the landlords following him. Most of the Moslems are out of sheer ignorance apathetic to subtler themes of politics, though by no means less attached to Islam than Jinnah himself. Fewer votes were cast by them in the last elections in which League had only few candidates successful. Fewer would be cast now because of their preoccupation with economic grievances. But the votes previously cast for Congress would go to Congress; those cast for League would go to League. In districts where there is a general swing towards League or Congress, many votes would be cast on the winning side. This being called in election terminology 'swing over' means that the voters on neither side are in heat of election and would cast their votes on the winning side. 'Swing over' is not synonymous with political education or display of steady political loyalty towards any political creed.

This may create jitters in the League circles but it is based on scientific mass observation. This new technique of 'election census' has been very successful in Britain, France and U.S.A. In U.S.A. the Gallup poll represents the latest improvement on such scientific collection of data about the public opinion. And it is not possible for ten Jinnahs rolled into one and multiplied by ten to change such features of undergrowth of public opinion overnight as if by moving a magic wand. What he may achieve with persistent effort and with his present party machinery intact in five or ten years is a different matter. We are in an atomic age in which the importance of an atom or a molecule, its gravity, energy, reaction force, or electromotive force could not be discounted or ignored. The atoms and molecules of League may achieve much more than we have credited them with so far. On the other hand, the Congress machinery is more formidable and more strong than eight years before.

I

SOLID ROCK OF UNITY

There were (and possibly to some extent still there are) many factions inside the Congress in the days of yore. But since 1940, and more so since August, 1942, the ranks in Congress have been closed up. And, those who were used to be called Congress rightists talk now, in matter of political action, much the same language as that of the socialists and the left radicals. Experience has made them wiser and chary of the need for unity.

Such was the mental frame-up that Congressmen brought to Simla, and in spite of which Jinnah has very recently attacked Mahatma Gandhi in a press note dated August 8, 1945. There is no doubt that the top-most leader of the Congress had no difference with other Congressmen, nor was he a bar in the way of any political understanding. His Highness Aga Khan, though mainly a sportsman and a connoisseur of beautiful women, made shrewd observations about Gandhiji wanting settlement. Mahatma Gàndhi's position was unambiguously clear. In fact he had made it understood in the course of Gandhi-Linlithgow and Gandhi-Wavell correspondence as to what he wanted. He said *inter alia* that he wanted the unconditional release of all prisoners convicted of Congress offences, as a gesture of the British goodwill towards India ; and that since the lapse of the August revolution he had ceased to be the dictator of Congress and could not be its spokesman till the All-India Congress Committee had met and reconsidered the matter, though, however, he could offer advice in his capacity of being an *ex-officio* member of the Congress.

What Gandhiji has placed before the world is undoubtedly a new philosophy, a new technique and a new programme of action. It is not a passive acceptance but a dynamic challenge. "It may not be accepted," says Dr. Rajendra Prasad, "but it cannot be ignored." Dr. Prasad further says, "The great war has been fought and won in Europe by the Allied nations against Germany. Peace yet remains to be won. Problems of a fundamental nature face the world. The great problem is to define the relations between individuals and individuals, individuals and States, and States and States. The war has reduced the position of the individual *vis-a-vis* the State even in countries which used to take pride in allowing freedom to him. There is no sign in the horizon that those who have led the victorious nations yet realise the costliness, not only in men and materials but also in morals and the ultimate futility of war. The foundations of peace are being laid once again on armaments, and it is not difficult to imagine that time will show that the foundations are being laid on shifty sands and not on firm rock. There is one encouraging sign, however, which is discernible. Leaders of thought all the world over are not satisfied and searching questions are being put and answered. Thought is always the precursor of action. Politicians and war leaders are bound to fall in line with the leaders of thought, although there may be a long time lag. Modern civilisation must recognise that if it has to survive, it must replace hatred by love, exploitation by service, domination by co-operation, right by duty, acquisition by renunciation, coercion by consent, enforced obedience by self-imposed discipline, and imposed submission by voluntary surrender."

Dr. Rajendra Prasad has laid stress on the not-non-violent and not-so-violent philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi as made clear in his attitude towards world problems and Indian problems. This indeed needed clarification for the

sake of unity in the Congress. In all his correspondence since his release from prison Gandhiji has touched on the problem of Hindu-Moslem unity. His view was that the League could be recognised as the representative of the Mussulmans but that the Congress represented all, irrespective of caste and creed. This was what Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel confirmed in the course of his statement issued to the press when he was released from prison. "On returning to active political life," he said, "after an absence of nearly three years, I have been pressed to say something on the general situation facing the country and on the events that have happened during the period. I, however, propose to say nothing before the Working Committee has met and deliberated on these issues There is one sentence, however, in the viceregal declaration on which I must speak, not as a member of the Working Committee but as a Congressman. It is that the parity between the caste Hindus and the Mussulmans must not persist. If this condition subsists, the Congress has no place in the conference. The Congress is not a sectional organisation. It represents the Indians belonging to all creeds and races. It can be, and has been, represented by Moslem, Hindu, Christian and Parsee presidents. I hope no nationalist will be party to any arrangement which is on the basis of religious division. I express these sentiments not only on my behalf but on behalf of all those Congressmen who are with Gandhiji at this moment."

The last sentence is worth noting. It represents the crux of the unity problem—unity within, unity without and unity first.

The same theme was hit out by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in the course of his press message that he gave when he came out of the prison after three years of isolation.

"(During the period of my being in gaol)," he says, "vast and revolutionary changes have taken place all over the world and in India. Those changes are obvious

enough in the war situation as well as in the far-reaching effect of the war. Yet perhaps changes are greatest in the minds of men everywhere. From these minds I have been cut off.

"All I could do was to observe the reactions of my own mind to events that have taken place. In India, in spite of seeming stagnation in the political field, I have no doubt that our people have been powerfully affected by what they have gone through during these gruesome years. I must come in contact with my own people and with others before I can venture to say anything. But I know this that whatever changes take place, internal or external, the fundamental objectives and principles remain the same. For us in India these objectives can be stated as Indian independence and freedom within the large context of the freedom and co-operation of other nations and peoples. Neither of them can be isolated from the other. I do not think that Indian independence can function by itself in a world where domination of one nation by another continues. Nor do I think that it is conceivable that any stable world order can be evolved unless the 400 millions of India are really free. That freedom for India cannot and should not mean freedom of a few at the top but must mean democratic and economic freedom and equality of our 400 millions. For us political and economic freedom are intertwined as they are in every other country. The terrible tragedy of Bengal famine, as ghastly, if not more so, as anything has happened in the year is not only final judgment on British rule in India but is also death warrant of economic order which produces such tragedies. We can never forget in India all that our people have suffered in the past, more especially during these three years. But at the same time we may not allow our sentiments to run away with us and cloud our vision about the future. I remember a word

of Mahatma Gandhi on that fateful evening of August 8 : ' Though the eyes of the world are bloodshot, we must keep calm and clear-eyed.' In the world of today there appears to be much that fills one with despair but there is also ground for hope. Passion for freedom exists in every country. If we in India are passionately attached to our freedom, we are equally anxious for all other classes or classes who have been deprived of freedom or exploited to achieve their freedom. Therefore with all freedom-loving people of the world, we shall always co-operate for their good as well as the larger good of the world as a whole."

Unity figures in the above statement of Pandit Nehru. The inevitable reference to the world problem is there, and finally the loyalty to the sparsely-clothed (but with abundance of good sense and good faith) leader is clear. The good old diplomat, while hoping for the best, is prepared to wait for further period between effort and the completion of effort.

To cap this discussion and a united demand of the country comes Mahatma Gandhi's statement made in June, 1945, on the eve of the Simla Conference, which touches the bare problems raised in the Wavell Plan, and wherein it is worth noting that Gandhiji sticks to the principles embodied in Gandhi-Linlithgow correspondence. In spite of his idealist philosophy and occasional sentimentalism there is tremendous consistency in his writings which is uncommon in the utterances of any statesman of his calibre. True to that correspondence Gandhiji prefers to be called an adviser. His statement to the press says : " On the purely political aspect of the viceregal broadcast I prefer to say nothing. Now that the members of the Working Committee of the Congress are free, I can only give them my advice and it is they who have to shape the policy of the Congress and speak and act with authority. As soon as

I read the broadcast, I sent a wire to His Excellency the Viceroy drawing his attention to the fact that I have no *locus standi* as the *recognised representative of the Congress*. That function belongs to the President of the Congress or whoever is appointed to represent the Congress on a particular occasion. For several years I have acted unofficially as an adviser to the Congress whenever required. The public will remember that I went with the same unrepresentative character for my talks with Mr. Jinnah, and I can take up no other position with the British Government in this instance represented by the Viceroy . . . There is one aspect of the viceregal broadcast which certainly offends my ear and, I hope, will offend that of every politically minded Hindu. I refer to the expression *Caste Hindus*. I claim that there is no such person, speaking politically, as a *Caste Hindu*, let alone the Congress which speaks to represent the whole of India which is yearning after political independence. Let Veer Savarkar or Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee of the Hindu Mahasabha represent the Caste Hindus. Do they not represent all Hindus without distinction of caste? Do they not include the so-called untouchables? Do they themselves claim to be Caste Hindus? I hope not. Of all politically minded Hindus I know that even the revered Pandit Malaviyaji, though he observes caste distinction, will refuse to be called Caste Hindu, as distinguished from other Hindus. Modern tendency in Hinduism is to abolish all caste distinctions and this I maintain in spite of my knowledge of reactionary elements in the Hindu society. I can only hope, therefore, that the Viceroy has allowed himself to make use of the expression in utter ignorance. I want to acquit him of knowingly wounding the susceptibilities of the Hindu society of dividing it. I would not have dwelt on this matter but for the fact that it touches the political mind of Hindus in its sensitive spot

and carries with it political repercussions The proposed conference can do much useful work if it is put in its proper political setting and is at the very outset rendered immune from any fissiparous tendency. Undoubtedly all invitees might appear as Indians conjointly bent on achieving India's natural goal and not as persons representing several sections of Indian society. That is how I have viewed the Bhulabhai-Liaquat Ali understanding which I suppose laid the foundations for the viceregal conference. Shri Bhulabhai Desai's proposal as I understood it attracted me as one interested in solving communal tangle, and I assured him that I would use my influence with the members of the Working Committee and give my reasons for acceptance of his proposals and I have no doubt that, if both parties to the proposal correctly represent their constituents and have independence of India as their common goal, things must shape well. At this point I must stop and the Working Committee has to take up the thread. It is for its members to declare the Congress mind on the impending question."

There is the same Patelian anger about the Wavell attempt to subdivide India by raising the Aunt Sally of caste. There is less of discussion of world problem *a la* Nehru and is rightly left to Nehru *et* Rajendra Prasad.

So far as parity issue was concerned Pandit Nehru agreed with Gandhiji whom he had yet to meet. And, Pandit Nehru, in the same spirit, endorsed Sardar Patel's statement regarding the parity issue, though he did not express his opinion definitely on the Wavell proposals unless he had consulted Gandhiji and his other colleagues.

Whereas the views from Dr. Azad were concerned he definitely stressed that communalism must not have any place in the body politic of India. He strongly opposed the parity scheme. "I must make it clear," he remarked, "that the Congress will under no circumstances accept

its being termed a Hindu organisation or a sectarian or communal body. The Congress has been a national organisation since its very birth and the Working Committee's decision on the proposals will be arrived at only on a national basis."

However, in spite of all these differences and difficulties the Congress leaders presented a cheerful appearance before the conference began. They were optimistic as Pandit Nehru pointed out that the issue would not be allowed to rise to defeat the more important purpose of the conference, which was to get some form of a more nearly representative government in office. It was understandable, he said, that the Congress might want Moslems in the Council who represented those many Moslems who supported the Congress. He further said that there were many Moslems who did not follow the League, although he estimated that the League had grown in strength in recent years. Nevertheless, he said, the League always seemed to be stronger where the Moslem minority was smallest. Where the Moslem population was nearly equal to the Hindu population, or exceeded it, such as in the North-West Frontier, there, he said, the League was least strong.

If only League Moslems were appointed on the Council, all the Moslems who voted for Congress candidates in years past would be unrepresented. The same would be true of many Moslems in the North-West Frontier, who do not follow the League, and in Bengal and in the Punjab. But such issues could be dealt with without great difficulty.

Pandit Nehru emphasised that after all the conference was designed only to set up an interim government to operate until the elections could be held. Elections, he said, would give a basis for a recasting of the arrangement reached on the basis of strength of the various groups shown up in the voting. He predicted that if elections

were held now the Congress majorities in the provinces would be very large. He said that it was likely that more Moslem League candidates would be elected than were chosen in 1937. He asked that it be recognised that the situation in India was a peculiar situation which tended to emphasize communalism because other types of activity had been suppressed.

"It must be remembered," he said, "that India has been living under military and police government ever since the outbreak of the rebellion of 1942. The situation should be viewed as similar to the situation in Europe where resistance groups have been held underground until only recently."

In India, he said, a rapid change could be expected as economic and other factors arose to draw public attention away from strictly communal conflicts. He said that the communists had solidified their position after the ban on their operation had been lifted.

How did the press reflect this Congress attitude of optimism for achievement of the substance of freedom at Delhi based on ideas of Indian national unity? Typical of this is the following *Tribune* comment :

"Once again are the eyes of all patriotic Indians turned towards Simla, where the most important political conference, that has ever been held in this country, is about to commence its sittings. Whether the conference will be a success or a failure is on the knees of the gods, but it is safe to assert that in some most vital respects it is the first conference of its kind in India. Of no previous conference, convened by the highest official authority in India, could it be said that it had for its professed object, as the present conference has, to advise that authority regarding the formation of an interim government at the centre. Representative of organised political opinion in this country and indirectly and ultimately to prepare the ground for the establishment of an independent national

government whether within or outside the British Commonwealth of Nations. Nor in spite of the defects in its composition, its scope and terms of reference, was any previous conference held in that atmosphere of mutual goodwill on the part of all or most of those participating in it in which the present conference is being held. Confining ourselves for the present to the two most important parties, the Government and the Congress, who can fail to be impressed by the substantial difference in tone and temper between the messages addressed by the viceroy to Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President and those addressed by Mahatmaji and the Congress President to His Excellency and the utterances of the Government and the Congress on previous analogous occasions? It must be admitted by all fair-minded persons that the initiative in this case has been taken by Lord Wavell, but the warmth and fulness with which the other side has responded to this changed attitude on the part of the head of the Government, has once for all disproved the accusation of lack of goodwill on its part and proved the truth of the dictum that while distrust begets distrust, trust does beget trust."

Thus having praised broad-mindedness of both parties, the Paper expects the British Government representative to continue discussions in the same spirit.

"The proper atmosphere for the conference has been created and, indeed, the holding of the conference has been rendered possible by the frank and straightforward declaration by His Excellency that the acceptance of invitation to the conference does not make nor imply the acceptance by the invitees of the proposals of His Majesty's Government, but only a readiness on their part to discuss them. This was an entirely different thing from saying, as it had previously been reported to be the intention of his Majesty's Government to say, that their proposals were unalterable and must be either accepted or rejected. If

this had, indeed, been the intention of his Majesty's Government, the conference could have served no useful purpose and, as we know from the utterances of the Congress leaders, they at any rate would not have participated in it. Lord Wavell's clarification of the actual position has cleared the ground both for the Congress or other invitees to attend the conference. But participation in the conference, if it does not mean or imply commitment to the proposals, undoubtedly imposes a heavy responsibility on all those attending it. They owe it as much to the inviting authority as to themselves, their parties and their country to make the fullest constructive contribution in their power to the resolution of the impasse which has done incalculable harm already and which, if omitted to continue indefinitely, is fraught with disaster to all concerned. Two things have to be borne in mind in this connection. One is that the present is a scheme of an interim Government and is not intended to be a permanent solution of the Indian problem. The other is that no scheme of an interim Government is worth accepting, unless it paves the way to a final settlement and that an interim solution, which so far from paving the way to an ultimate settlement, actually blocks it, must be resisted by every means in India's power."

The gentlemen of the press had no illusions about the matter. Having seen through numerous Delhi and Simla conferences from the days of Minto, Morley, Birkenhead, Reading, Irwin and Wellington, down to the present times of frequent meetings and infrequent obstacles, they wanted the Simla Conference to set quickly to the task of examining India's united demand.

Another kind of comment made on this issue by the gentlemen of the press was the following observation of Dr. L. C. Jain in an article on the subject: "Lord Wavell no doubt realised this and realising it he wanted that India also should have a government composed of

her representative nationals. Both he and Mahatmā Gandhi were eager to secure, so far as possible, the services of the very best men in the country at least during the emergency period to tide over the crisis which has overtaken India. In national emergencies all controversies are set aside in progressive countries and the people unite together to pull their country out."

II

THE LEADERS MEET

The gentlemen of the press joined hands with the leaders who were to attend the conference, and evolved a plan of rapid disposal of the conference, in a manner satisfactory to all. One of the first questions, which the conference would have to decide, was the question of procedure and especially of the manner in which the panel or panels of names to be suggested to the Viceroy for appointment to the Executive Council were to be selected. Were they to be selected by the conference as a whole jointly or by the different groups of members acting singly? The second would have entirely been a wrong method and in some cases would not have proved even practicable. The conference contained only one Sikh member and one Scheduled Caste member. It could not surely be the intention of His Majesty's Government that the Sikh and Scheduled Caste members of the Executive Council, assuming that the Council was to be constituted on a communal basis, should be the nominees of those solitary individuals. Even as regards the two main parties, the very purpose of the conference would have been defeated, if each was concerned only with the selection of its own representatives. Such procedure would inevitably have led to the selection of such men to the Executive Council as would make it lack that team spirit, which was essential for the successful working of any Government.

Mr. Kalinath Ray, the Chief Editor of the *Tribune*, while commenting on this issue appealed to all the several parties concerned to approach the task before them not only with a desire but also with a sacred resolve to ex-

plore all the possibilities of an agreed solution of the problem. "It is" he remarked, "no mere question of trying again, as Mr. Amery said, but of trying again and again, of trying until the effort has succeeded in as full a measure as it can possibly succeed in the present circumstances. To the Viceroy, as representing the British Government, we have one special word to say. His Excellency has undoubtedly made a good beginning and has impressed all concerned with his sincerity of purpose. The initiation of an official effort to break the deadlock, after Mr. Amery had repeatedly declared that the British Government had done all that it could do and that it could not and would not do anything more until the Indian parties had come to an agreement among themselves, was solely, due to his earnestness, courage and statesmanship. But all this would be unavailing unless he was prepared to complete the good work begun by him and to implement the declared readiness of His Majesty's Government to transfer the government of India to India herself, irrespective of whether India is or is not able to produce a universally agreed solution. That all parties in India should make their utmost effort to arrive at such a solution goes without saying. But if all reasonable and practicable efforts fail, then, as practical men, British statesmen and officials, like the people of India themselves, should accept the greatest common measure of agreement among the several political parties in India as a substitute for an agreed settlement and so far as it lies in their power to help give effect to it. In no other way can they either prove their own *bona fides* or help India to realise her destiny as a nation. It would be monstrous to let one irreconcilable element in India permanently or even indefinitely obstruct her advance to her heaven-ordained goal of national unity and constitutional independence."

The conference opened in Simla on June 26, 1945. The Viceroy, in the course of his opening address, said

that what was proposed was not a constitutional settlement, was not a final solution of India's complex problems " Why not ? Why begin with small problems, why not attend to the big problems direct ? " the Viceroy should have been questioned.

The Viceroy claimed himself to be the sincere friend of India and said that he would strive his utmost for the good of the country. Every Viceroy and Representative of the Government in Britain as well as the Head of the semi-autonomous (or later autonomous) administration, from Cornwallis to Canning down to the period of military-leader Wavell has said the same thing. If, however, they had not said it they might find themselves just bored out by the multifarious problems of administration.

After the statement of Lord Wavell, the leaders of parties set forth their views on the Plan. Maulana Azad explained the Congress view-point on which the discussion took place during the rest of the day. The Congress President answered a number of questions and told the pressmen that he had urged the Viceroy to lift the ban on the All-India Congress Committee and release all political prisoners.

Those who attended the conference were : First arrived the ex-Premier of Orissa, Raja of Parlakimedi. Then came the Premier of the Punjab, Major Malik Khizar Hayat Khan who along with Sir Evan Jenkins and Mr. Menon acted as reception committee. Next came Sir Henry Richardson and Mr. Bhulabhai Desai. The latter was very much cheered. Then quietly slipped the South Indian Disraeli, Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar. Next man to come was Dr. Khan Sahib, the Premier of N.W.F.P. Dr. Khan was loudly cheered, he invited special attention. Others were Dr. P. N. Bannerjee, the leader of the Nationalist Party in the Central Assembly and the Sikh leader Master Tara Singh who was followed by a band of uniformed Sikhs carrying kirpans

and the Sikh flag. The Congress delegation led by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad consisted of Pt. Ravishanker Shukla, ex-Premier of C.P., Pt. Govindvallabh Pant, ex-Premier of U.P., Mr. B. G. Kher, ex-Premier of Bombay, and Govindlal S. Motilal, leader of the Congress Party in the Council of State. Other invitees followed. Most of the leaders met at the lawns of the Viceregal Lodge just as before the leaders of the nations of the world met outside Hotel de Geneva or in the evenings near Lake Geneva while they met for the World Conference of Peace of the League of Nations. (It is hoped that before long similar conferences would again start under the auspices of the League of Nations. But such conferences were in fact small conferences dealing with peace and some of the interior problems of the nations of the world.) Great enthusiasm was observed when the Viceroy shook hands with the national leaders whom the British Government had kept behind the bars for the last three years.

An outstanding event of this *Petite* conference was that Jinnah and Azad did not as much as exchange a single word with each other. In this matter Jinnah behaved much like Herr Gresier (the cold, unemotional character of the Nazis) at Geneva, Herr Fœrster at Danzig or the Jap delegates at Geneva. Otherwise, among civilised people, it is always considered a point of etiquette to give and take the customary greeting representing good humour, as distinct from profound physical sickness. Suave and scholarly Azad, hamstrung by Jinnahite bad manners, retired to a corner of the lawn with his lieutenant, Premier B. G. Kher.

The Viceroy, representative and the *de jure* head of Indian autonomous and semi-autonomous administration, was introduced on the lawns to the gentlemen of the Congress, gentlemen of the League, and of other parties, the leaders of groups, and the gentlemen of the press.

- The Viceroy cautioned the gentlemen of the press

against over-optimism, over-statement, under-statement and scribed statement (drawn up at the office of the press).

Let us now take up the resume of the conference itself. The first day's press message struck an optimistic note, and stated *inter alia* :

" There were serene and smiling faces among the leaders who came out of the Conference Hall. On being asked whether he had represented the case of the Hindu Mahasabha at the conference, Dr. P. N. Bannerjee replied that 'all that I could tell you is that when an opportunity arises for that you will find me not failing in my duty.'

" Maulana Azad, Congress President, while he was having his tea, on being asked by the *Tribune's* Special Representative, said that all he could say was that after Lord Wavell had spoken, which speech of course did not contain anything new, he was called upon to explain the Congress point of view, which he did and it was on that point of view, which he explained before the conference, that the conference spent its time during the rest of the day. After lunch discussion on the various issues was raised. A number of questions were asked from Maulana Azad on certain things.

" He was unwilling to say as to what transpired at the conference because, he said, they had decided to remain silent about the deliberations. But he had no hesitation in saying it was clear that the Congress could not, of course, accept the position that the Moslem nominees to the proposed Executive Council were to be nominated only by the League representative. The Congress position was that a person who was acceptable to the Hindus, Sikhs, Moslems, Christians and others would be a far better person to represent than the person representing only one community. However, he said, that the question was yet to be discussed and when it came up before the conference, the Congress representative would certainly take up that position.

" Asked if he had urged the removal of the ban on the Congress and the release of the Congress prisoners in jail, Maulana Azad, feelingly replied : ' How can we forget our friends behind the prison bars ? Obviously the Congress can't take any decision unless made by the Working Committee and the A.-I.C.C. was free to confirm it. Therefore, if anything was to happen, this ban must necessarily be removed against the Congress.'

" Maulana Azad told the *Tribune* Representative that he had placed that demand before the Viceroy yesterday and pressed that point today also.

" Asked if the Congress was prepared to co-operate in the war effort if the new Government, as suggested by the Wavell plan was formed, the Maulana said that the Congress position was that they were prepared to help in the war effort provided certain conditions were fulfilled.

" Q. Have those conditions now been fulfilled by the Government ?

" Maulana Azad replied that that was a matter about which he could not give a definite reply at once but the matter still required their consideration. Therefore, the Maulana said, if the conditions which the Congress had suggested previously, were fulfilled they would have no hesitation in considering the proposals what they were worth for.

" In quarters in touch with the leaders who attended the conference today the feeling was that there prevailed an atmosphere of cordiality at the meeting.

" Before the conference at the Viceroy's House began today a number of Congress invitees met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad at his residence.

" ' The conference must not fail,' expressed the spirits of determination with which the invitees went to the conference. This spirit was unaffected by Mahatma Gandhi's decision not to take part in the conference."

So far we have dealt with only Jinnah and Azad. Activities of other leaders needs be perforce discussed

and these were *inter alia** :

" Since the time the conference dispersed Simla has been full of speculations with regard to what had happened at the conference. This is so specially because the short press *communiqué* issued from the Viceregal House was not informative at all.

" Groups of pressmen were seen surrounding individual members at their places of residence trying to scrape out whatever little they could from them but ' confidential ' is the common word that the members at the conference have been using in reply to the queries made by enterprising journalists.

" It is, however, learnt that the conference held a full discussion today in which besides Lord Wavell, who made the opening speech, and the speeches made by the Congress President, as the representative of India's biggest national organisation, leaders of the other parties including Mr. Jinnah, Master Tara Singh, R.B. Shivraj, Dr. Bannerjee, Malik Khizar Hayat Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib also spoke.

" The Pathan Premier's speech was characterised by his usual vigorous frankness and he is stated to have rebutted the argument that the Congress could not represent the Moslems. He is stated to have cited the example of the patriotic Mussulmans of his province who, he said, stood solidly behind the Congress flag.

" Malik Khizar Hyat's speech was marked for its plea for, what he described as the martial classes of the Punjab. He claimed special representation for them and said that whoever might be given representation because of their numerical strength, the martial classes should be given representation because of their importance and the part they had played in the war.

" Master Tara Singh is credited with having espoused

*Simla itself was agog with rumours about the future of the conference, and feeling of high tension was in the air.

the cause of the Hindu Mahasabha for representation being given at the conference to that organisation as representing the Hindus. He is stated to have conceded that the Congress represented no particular community but the nationalist India.

" Apart from the general discussion that took place at the conference, it can be stated that of the six items on the agenda only two were disposed of and the more important on which the future of the conference depends are still to come. The most important of the item, of course, is the one relating to the constitution of the proposed central executive and the method of appointment of the new Executive Council. That is a rock from which Lord Wavell must steer his ship safely, if he is to succeed in his present plan, because already the League circles appear to be very much concerned over this matter.

" The decision of Mahatma Gandhi to keep away from the conference has created a sort of a suspicion, though unfounded, among the League circles.

" One of the leaders said that the League circles apprehend that Mahatma Gandhi's decision to keep away from the conference means that there was something up his sleeve. It is, however, significant that even though this suspicion lurks in the Leaguers' mind, Mahatma Gandhi has no sleeves wherein there could be anything to create any doubt. The League circles are, however, upset and efforts are being made by them to create a situation where it may become necessary for Lord Wavell to adjourn the conference.

" The League circles are anxious that Gandhiji should attend the conference so that their leader may be able to talk to him directly instead of talking to Maulana Azad on behalf of the Congress.

" Lord Wavell is, however, credited with determination to see the present conference through and he

would agree to an adjournment only in case it becomes absolutely necessary and if all the parties agree to it.

"A prominent Moslem League invitee to the conference was asked by a prominent Sikh M.L.A. (Central) if he could give his clothes to the washerman so that he may have enough clothes to stay on in Simla. The Moslem Leaguer is stated to have replied : ' You may not do so because we may pack off as a result of an adjournment of the conference on Wednesday.'

"Ever since the conference concluded, meetings have been held both at Armsdell and the Cecil Hotel."

The next day (June 27) the newspapers carried the headlines "Settlement in Sight". There was to be (in and from that day onward) only one sitting a day of the conference in the morning at 11 a.m., due to the fact that many leaders were not keeping good health.

There were ugly demonstrations by Hindu Mahasabha extremists, and one of them tried to strike C. Rajagopalachariar with a *lathi*). The intruder was promptly despatched to public lock-house.

The laurels of the day were easily carried by middle-man Pant, who tried to establish contact between Jinnah and the Congress President.

When the *Tribune* representative met Mr. Jinnah before the League leader had seen Pt. Pant, he said : "I am sorry I can't tell you anything at present, but very soon something may happen and I may have to run after you."

"Is it true that a settlement is in sight ? " asked the representative. "I would ask you not to press me for an answer" was the reply that came from Jinnah. "I am not saying anything," he added, "because I don't want any chance to be spoiled of anything that might be happening."

It is understood that when Maulana Azad was approached by a press representative, who asked him if he would

meet any League representative if one is sent to him, the Congress President replied : " The door of my hut is open to all. I will welcome any one who comes to talk to me."

Dr. Khan Sahib when approached by the press representative said : " I am very hopeful that some kind of settlement is being arrived at." He did not like to disclose any details which, he said, were with the Congress President.

An after-midnight telephonic message says :

" The optimism that prevailed during the evening at Simla continued to grow at night as Pandit Pant, as an emissary of the Congress, sat in the room of Mr. Jinnah, talking to him about the possibility of submitting an agreed list of names for the proposed Executive Council.

" Having remained with Mr. Jinnah for about two hours, Pandit Pant went straight to Maulana Azad, and both of them contacted Mahatma Gandhi.

" Complete secrecy is being maintained as to what transpired between Mr. Jinnah and Pandit Pant, neither of the leaders on either side being prepared to divulge anything about the talks. The talks, however, are expected to have far-reaching effects on the deliberations of the Wavell conference.

" It is not possible to know at this late hour as to what are the reactions of the Congress circles to these talks but an unconfirmed report says that Mr. Jinnah has offered to Pandit Pant that he would be prepared to include one of the Congress nominees among the Moslems for the would-be Executive Council, provided the name should be given by the Congress Party to be included by Mr. Jinnah in his panel, and further that coalition ministries should also be formed in the North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab, where the League should have its share.

" No confirmation is available about this but the

proposal of Mr. Jinnah is being discussed in political circles.

" Mr. Jinnah is reported to have suggested that the Congress Party should give him a panel of names out of which he would make his selection of a person to be included in his list for the proposed Executive Council.

" While these significant suggestions were being discussed between leaders at 'Armsdell,' where the Congress President is staying, and Room No. 12 of the Cecil Hotel, where Mr. Jinnah is staying, just below in a room in the Cecil Hotel Sikh leaders are considering as to who would be the best Sikh nominee for the proposed Executive Council. Already there have been long deliberations among Sikh leaders over this issue.

" The common view held in Sikh circles is that their nominee should neither be a title-holder nor, as far as possible, a non-Jat.

" In this connection the name of Sardar Partap Singh, M.L.A., at present detained as a Congress detenu, ever since August, 1942, is being mentioned.

" The younger and nationalist element among the Akalis is supporting the name of Sardar Partap Singh, whom they want to represent them ; but there is a small, though influential group, which is opposed to Sardar Partap Singh, due to party politics.

" The possibility of Master Tara Singh going to the Executive Council is being canvassed. It is suggested that Master Tara Singh would be the most suitable candidate for the Executive Council, if no other candidate can be agreed upon.

" Master Tara Singh is the person on whom various groups would be agreed. He is also the man whom Lord Wavell is reported to have described as a fit person for the proposed Executive Council.

" Lord Wavell feels that the proposed Executive Council should consist of men of character, men of ability,

men who carry influence with their community and men who can take decisions.

"The report that Malik Khizar Hayat Khan has yielded to Mr. Jinnah is denied in Unionist circles.

"It is also denied that there was any *rapprochement* between the Punjab Premier and the League leader.

"Tomorrow will see further progress, if the parties are able to submit a common list. This would cut short any further discussion and decisions will be made soon. The future of the Wavell conference will depend upon whether or not an agreed list can be submitted tomorrow."

Another view (June 27) of the conference was as follows:

"Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Congress President, Mr. B. G. Kher, ex-Premier Bombay, Pandit R. S. Shukla, ex-Premier, C.P. and Mr. Srikrishna Sinha, ex-Premier, Bihar had talks with Mahatma Gandhi this afternoon after the Leaders' Conference had adjourned.

"Maulana Azad left Manorville, Mahatma Gandhi's residence, after an hour's discussion with Mahatma Gandhi.

"Following an hour's discussion between Maulana Azad and Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Govindvallabh Pant arrived at Cecil Hotel at 6 p.m., presumably with a message from the Congress President to Mr. Jinnah, President of the All-India Moslem League.

"As soon as definite conclusions are reached by the Leaders' Conference, it is understood the Congress President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, will ask Lord Wavell, the president of the conference, for a short adjournment of four or five days to enable him to call a meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Simla. Although the Congress Working Committee has given full and plenary powers to the Congress President in regard to all questions concerning the Leaders' Conference, the Congress President told the *Associated Press* today

that he would like to have the Working Committee with him before he finally selected the Congress nominees to the Executive Council.

"The Jinnah-Pant talks ended at 8-15 p.m., the talks having lasted 135 minutes. On coming to the lounge of the Cecil Hotel Pandit Pant was besieged by a large gathering of journalists whom he told, 'I have no statement to make.' Asked if he was meeting Mr. Jinnah again Pandit Pant repeated his earlier statement that he had nothing to say.

"All the Moslem League invitees to the Leaders' Conference met Mr. Jinnah immediately after Pandit Pant had left him.

"Immediately on Pandit Pant's return from Mr. Jinnah to Armsdell, the residence of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Pandit Govindvallabh Pant was closeted with the Congress President. It is not yet known whether the Congress President and Pandit Pant will personally meet Mahatma Gandhi tonight and convey to him the trend of Pandit Pant's talks with Mr. Jinnah or send a messenger.

"The Congress President has called a conference of all Congress invitees at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

"Immediately after their return from the conference all the six Moslem League invitees met in Mr. Jinnah's room for consultations. They dispersed after an hour for lunch.

"Mr. Jinnah on his return from the conference was received at the Cecil Hotel by Nawab of Mamdot, President of the Punjab Moslem League, and others.

"Pandit Govindvallabh Pant was with Mahatma Gandhi for two hours after his 135-minute talk with Mr. Jinnah, President of the All-India Moslem League. Pandit Pant is understood to have conveyed to Mahatma Gandhi what transpired during his talks with Mr. Jinnah.

"While the exact result of the Pant-Jinnah talks is not known, the meeting between Pandit Govindvallabh

Pant, a member of the Congress Working Committee, and Mr. Jinnah has heightened expectations of the outcome of the Leaders' Conference. Knowledgeable circles believe that the Pant-Jinnah talks will produce some tangible results by way of adjustment.

"Mian Iftikharuddin, President of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, was with Mahatma Gandhi for an hour this morning. He is reported to be working for an understanding between the Congress and the Moslem League so that a joint and agreed list of names can be presented to Lord Wavell when the conference resumes its sitting tomorrow. Mian Iftikharuddin has been in frequent touch with the Congress President Maulana Abul Kalam Azad."

Pant with Azad shared the honour of being the hero of the day in the discussions being held. Next day too he figured prominently in the discussions.

In wet weather and rather in a damp spirit, the members of the Wavell Conference met at 11 a.m. (June 28) in the Conference Room of the Viceroy's House. It appears that in spite of the best efforts made during whole of the previous day after the conference had adjourned and in spite of the negotiations having been carried on till a late hour in the night, no common agreed list for the Executive Council could be drawn up by the Congress and the Moslem League. Therefore the enthusiasm, which had gone very high the previous day, had been rather damped this morning, when Mr. Jinnah and his colleagues and Maulana Azad and his colleagues went to the Viceroy's House in closed rickshaws while it was raining.

The conference, however, was adjourned after one hour's deliberations to meet again on Friday next. The adjournment was decided upon at the request of Mr. Jinnah who asked for it in order to discuss the question of drawing up an agreed list of nominees for the proposed

Executive Council, with the representatives of different parties.

The previous day's visit of Pt. Pant to Mr. Jinnah was the result of the desire expressed by the League President to meet him and discuss the matter with him in order to find a way out. Mr. Jinnah again expressed the same desire, and Pt. Pant met the League President at 3 p.m. at the Cecil Hotel. Talks continued for an hour and a critical stage had been reached in the talks.

Pandit Govindvallabh Pant immediately on his return from Mr. Jinnah was closeted with the Congress President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, presumably explaining to him the trend of his talks between him and Mr. Jinnah.

However, by June 28, it was also becoming clear that the leaders were engaged not only in searching for points of agreement among themselves but also in heart-searchings : and there were asperity and bitterness among nationalist Moslems like Dr. Khan Sahib on account of Congress scheme to placate communalist Moslems.

On June 29, the papers carried the headlines *Hopes of Settlement Are Receding, Jinnah Is the Main Stumbling Block, Jinnah's Obsstinacy Might Wreck the Negotiations.* Before that stage was reached the Congress President, scholar and diplomat, tried to stem the rot from setting in.

III

AZAD PLAYS FAIR

On June 28, Maulana Azad cut the ice and said that it appeared that there was, in some circles, misunderstanding of the Congress position which required to be clarified. He placed the invitation to the Simla Conference before the Working Committee on June 21. After careful consideration the Working Committee decided that he should meet the Viceroy before the conference, and should himself participate in it, and instruct other Congress invitees to attend, if as a result of the preliminary meeting he felt it proper to do so.

The Congress President had pleasure of meeting the Viceroy on the forenoon of June 24, and after obtaining the clarification on some of the preliminary points attended the conference, and was participating into deliberations. He was not attending the conference in his personal capacity, but on behalf of the Congress Working Committee. It had given him full powers and authorised him to adopt such an attitude as he might consider necessary in respect of the various problems that might arise. It was therefore his concern to watch carefully the changes in detail and application of the new offer and take decisions accordingly. When all the details of the picture had been filled, he had himself met his colleagues of the Working Committee and placed it before them for final decision. He added that there was no doubt on the point that the attitude of the Congress was constructive and not destructive.

He was doing his best to build rather than destroy, said Azad in a telegram to the ruling chief of Alwar.

The ruling chief wired in reply saying that the offer of the Government was most generous. The Viceroy was most sincere and sympathetic. The proposals satisfied most of the country's demands. He was very glad to know that Azad wished to look forward and backward, and that the Congress desired to be constructive and helpful. He hoped Azad's wise and statesman-like guidance would bring about a settlement of political impasse. "If all parties agreed to work together, an era of all-round advancement leading to self-government," said Azad, "and a united and prosperous India within the British Commonwealth would ensure. This was a rare and golden opportunity and should not be missed in the interest of our motherland."

Maulana Azad in saying the above had the backing of the non-Moslem Congress members who had no desire to let down the nationalist Moslems. The point of view of this action of the Congress was expressed by Pandit Pant who said that they were anxious for a settlement, for they did not want any outsider to be able to say that they could not decide things between themselves. But that did not mean that they were prepared to sacrifice the principles on which the Congress stood. They were not for power only. They stood for principles, and if their point of view was not acceptable to others, they would not mind remaining out of office. They could say that while they were prepared that the League's point of view be conceded, they were not prepared to sacrifice nationalist Moslems who had stood by the Congress through thick and thin.

This statement was significant, and indicated the spirit that prevailed in the political circles there. This and the view expressed by Maulana Azad reflected the strong attitude the Congress had taken up on the question of evolving an agreed list of names for the proposed Executive Council.

So great was the effect of the powerful drive of Azad for fairness, and equity for all, that Military-man Wavell was at first willing to agree to him. Gandhiji was also kept informed about the day-to-day events as mentioned previously on June 29. Azad was closeted with Gandhiji for four hours.

On June 29, the need of the presence of Nehru was acutely felt. The Congress President's secretariat got into telephonic communication with the Anand Bhawan at Allahabad and conveyed Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's desire that Pandit Nehru should come up to Simla immediately for consultations.

The S.O.S. from the Maulana which was received at the Anand Bhawan was followed by a telephone trunk call from Simla. The call again stressed to Pandit Nehru the urgency of his immediate presence at Simla. It was also said that Maulana Azad was expecting Pandit Nehru the next day at Kalka and that arrangements for a car to take him to Simla had been made there. In reply to his S.O.S. Pandit Nehru had sent a telegram to Azad reading as "Coming Simla earliest".

But though the Congress President was in the need of the help of Pandit Nehru he described the Wavell proposals as a beam between two walls. "The Wavell proposals," he said, "if accepted, would be like a beam between two walls, an interim arrangement, which can help us to open the door to freedom."

The resounding effect of the judicious attitude of Azad was that it was said that the Congress had played cricket and played it well. This was the impression created by the part played by the Congress invitees to the Simla Conference under the distinguished leadership of one of India's greatest Moulam divines, Maulana Azad, who presided over and guided the destinies of India's greatest national organisation. Even though not much was known about the actual proceedings of Lord Wavell's

conference, which were, of course, kept confidential, the Congress President was stated to have played a most conspicuous part and actually dominated the conference proceedings. By his wisdom and sagacious handling of every situation that arose and with the support of his loyal and devoted team of some of India's distinguished sons, the Congress President was able to rise to such heights which appeared to have dazzled even the worst critics of the Congress.

Gandhiji's absence from the conference robbed it considerably of its effect and influence, yet Maulana Azad kept India's flag flying high. He took his stand on a nationalist basis and the determination and decision with which he refused to yield to communalism would go into the pages of the Indian History as the proudest chapter of recent events connected with India's struggle for independence.

It appeared that Mr. Jinnah banked upon the old history of the Congress yielding to communalism in order to appease uncompromising communalists. Maulana Azad stood fast against Mr. Jinnah's every attempt to reduce the Congress to the status of an organisation representing the Hindus alone. He refused to concede to Mr. Jinnah's contention that the League alone represented the Moslems of India and in this he was supported by the brave Pathan Premier who is so well known for his outspokenness and sincerity. Maulana Azad always spoke in Hindustani and expounded the Congress viewpoint most clearly and won laurels. It may be stated without contradiction that Mr. Jinnah had his first defeat in the game of politics because he was unable to have his way. This was not expected even by himself and his followers.

Pat on the previous statement of Azad came the following observation from the Maulana declaring that the Congress approach to the Wavell Plan was not dictated

to by party consideration but that it was a national approach. "The Congress approach," said the Maulana, "was independent without reference to what other parties would or would not do." It was for the Viceroy to decide.

The Congress President said that by the very fact of agreeing to participate in the conference the Congress had shown its readiness to be constructive in its attitude rather than be destructive. The Congress could very well have demanded the release of all political prisoners still under detention in order to create a favourable atmosphere and also the removal of the ban on the All-India Congress Committee and other allied organisations before agreeing to participate in the Simla Conference. And, the Maulana Sahib emphasised that nobody could have blamed the Congress had it insisted on the fulfilment of those conditions as a pre-requisite for Congress participation. The Congress waived this even at the risk of being misunderstood by its own followers and proved its readiness to contribute its share to the success of the constructive move that had been made by Lord Wavell. "The Congress could not have gone farther," the Maulana said, "all reasonable men should agree that the Congress could not have gone farther than this."

Explaining the Congress approach to the Wavell Plan, the Congress President emphasised that it was not a party approach. The Congress would always have before it the national point of view and any step that the Congress took would be in accordance with the traditions and policy pursued all along.

The Congress President further elucidated that the selection of the personnel for the panel would not be confined to Congressmen alone. Their object was to have the best men in the country, irrespective of the fact whether they were Congressmen or not. In reply to a suggestion that the Congress was big enough to afford to

yield to the Moslem League without suffering in stature or prestige, Maulana Azad said that he did not share that view. He felt that if the Congress failed to show sufficient strength and determination at a critical juncture like the one in which they happened to find themselves, to adhere steadfastly to its national outlook, and the principles for which it always stood, the future of the Congress organisation would be jeopardised.

Jawaharlal Nehru confirmed his faith in the leadership of Azad saying that he came to Simla fourteen years ago more or less on similar work. He had come once again in response to the call from Rashtrapati the Maulana Sahib. But whatever might have happened he wanted the people to understand one thing, and that was that they of the Congress had not come for a *tamasha*. They had come there to see if they could find a way out of the difficulties of that period.

Like Nehru the nationalist Moslems supported the Congress President and got an assurance from him that the Working Committee, which held fateful meeting in those days, would (like him) also give its support to the nationalist Moslems.

Maulana Hassan Ahmed Madni, President, Jamait-ul-Ulama-i-Hind, was present at the morning sitting by special invitation. He remained with the Congress Working Committee for one hour after which he made the following statement :

" I attended a meeting of the Congress Working Committee on the invitation of the Congress President in order to elucidate the resolution of the Nationalist Moslems' Conference held at Delhi on June 28. I placed the view-point of the Conference before the Working Committee whose members gave a patient hearing to my representation. The President and members of the Working Committee were convinced of the justice of the view-point of the nationalist Mussulmans and assured the nationalist

Mussulmans that the Working Committee stood with them and would continue to do so in future."

Maulana Hassan Ahmed Madni added :

" Nationalist Moslems are prepared to welcome this plan, only in so far as it marks a step towards the achievement of India's freedom. They will, therefore, judge the plan in the light of struggles and sacrifices which have been their history for the last quarter of a century. It is clear that the outcome of the Simla Conference largely depends upon the intention and procedure of Lord Wavell but I would at the same time like to reiterate on behalf of all nationalist Moslems of India, our complete confidence in the leadership of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Nationalist Moslems are prepared to co-operate with all progressive forces in the country in the realisation of our common objective of independence with the right to secede from the British Commonwealth."

K. Ahmed Abbas represented Azad as having said : " This is a critical moment in our political life and, therefore, it is essential that we should keep before us the real significance of the temporary situation that has arisen in the country. We should neither attach exaggerated and undue importance to the Wavell offer nor should we ignore the real demands and exigencies of the situation. Consistent with the defence of our principles if the way is opened to a temporary solution leading to our ultimate goal of freedom then we should unhesitatingly avail ourselves of it. If such a way is not opened then we should watch our step and not budge an inch from our position."

Even Fazal-ul-Huq, who has often changed his political complexion chameleon-like, supported Azad saying that the Moslem members in opposition in Bengal Assembly in meeting assembled earnestly prayed that Congress should take fullest advantage of Wavell Plan as a definite step towards freedom of India. They had confidence in

Azad's leadership that Congress would do nothing to hamper Viceroy in his noble work. They also prayed that Congress would not give up its life-long ideals in order to placate the 'irreconcilable and do nothing,' which would embarrass Viceroy or even make him hesitate to go forward with his plan. Viceroy should be assured that he could safely ignore threats coming from any quarters.

But the urgent problem before the Working Committee and Maulana Azad was (apart from clarification of their position *vis-a-vis* Wavell proposals and the attitude towards nationalist Moslems) the choice of names for the Executive Council, and about this complete secrecy was being maintained.

Speculation was rife with regard to the list of names to be submitted by the Congress High Command to the Viceroy for inclusion in the proposed Executive Council and neither the President nor any member of the Congress Working Committee was even prepared to say this much that a list had been prepared. Anyway, it was almost certain that the Working Committee had drawn up the list at its meeting that day.

Those connected with the Congress were inclined to suggest at least three groups which were stated to have been discussed by the Working Committee so far as their main nominees were concerned.

The first group was the old one and was suggested to include Rajagopalachariar, Bhulabhai Desai and Govindvallabh Pant. Out of these the first two were the gentlemen who claimed to have provided the ladder by means of which, they held, the Congress had climbed up to that position after having remained in wilderness for about three years.

The second group, according to those connected with the Congress, contained the names of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr. Rajagopalachariar and Pt. Pant.

There was yet another school of thoughts which held that the Congress, in order to be able to give its top man to represent India's national organisation on the proposed Executive Council was bound to include Sardar Patel, the Super High Command of the Congress, Babu Rajendra Prasad and Pt. Nehru.

Pt. Nehru's name, by common consent, was being mentioned as the future member-in-charge of external affairs and about this name there was much less doubt then than there had been ever before. And if the Congress was to accept the offer of office under the Wavell Plan, Pt. Nehru's claim was there.

Even though Rajendra Babu was not keeping good health and those, who knew it, were inclined to hold that it might not be possible for him, in that state of health, to shoulder the responsibility, yet it was to point out that he was among the top men who could certainly, by accepting office on behalf of the Congress, bring credit to the Indian National Congress.

So far as Sardar Patel was concerned, even though it was recognised that he would certainly be the best man in order that the Congress spirit might be infused and through the office of the Executive Council the Congress programme might be carried out in its truest form, yet it was stated that in his absence there would hardly be left any authority which could have a unifying influence and could control the Congress representatives in the provinces and at the centre.

Maulana Azad, who as the President of the Congress was already overworked and in his present state of health would not be able to take up futher responsibilities on his shoulders, would certainly like to have Sardar Patel with him in order that, while the Maulana presided over the destinies of the national organisation, Sardar Patel should be there to control the affairs of the Congress provinces where the Congress was expected to resume

office immediately after the settlement was arrived at so far as the Wavell Plan was concerned.

Therefore, even though complete secrecy was being maintained, those supporting the idea of sending top men to the Executive Council were inclined to suggest that Pt. Nehru and Rajendra Babu might be certainties whereas Sardar Patel would be there only if Maulana Azad and Gandhiji spared him which they hardly could.

One thing, however, was being talked in political circles in Simla and that was that there was the possibility of elimination of Mr. Desai who was, at one time, suggested as a certainty. His name would be there in the list only if something unexpected happened at the last moment.

Mr. Asaf Ali's name was, however, suggested as a certainty.

The Sikh nominee was being included in the Congress list by the Sikh leaders' consent.

The name of the Christian representative was also being included in the list of the Congress.

The name of the Scheduled Castes was still under consideration.

* * * *

Maulana Azad saw Mr. Asaf Ali at the Cecil Hotel immediately after the meeting of the Working Committee was over and intimated to him all that transpired there. Due to illness, Mr. Asaf Ali did not attend the meeting of the Working Committee.

The selection of the proposed Executive Council was not concluded by July 7 when the Congress President requested the news-agencies to desist from speculation regarding the names selected by the Congress Committee.

At 6-45 p m. immediately after the Congress Working Committee meeting had concluded, Maulana Azad sent for pressmen at Manorville and informed them that the Work-

ing Committee had finally drawn up a list of fifteen names for the proposed Executive Council, which would be forwarded to the Viceroy the other day.

In drawing up that list, the Working Committee, said Maulana Azad, had kept the following main principles in view :

1. Ability was the first and foremost consideration and the Working Committee took particular care that men of ability only were chosen.

2. There was no party consideration of any kind and men who were considered able and efficient, even though outside the Congress fold, were also included in the list.

3. So far as possible, particular care was taken that the various minorities should be represented on the Congress list.

On July 8, President Azad sent his list to the British Government representative. Viceroy's reply (then undisclosed) was received on the 9th and on the latter day was also announced the probable list of Congress 'fifteen' for the proposed Executive Council. This reflects well on the fair-mindedness of Maulana Azad and his cabinet.

A political correspondent at Simla gave the following list of names submitted by the Congress :

Pandit Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (three caste Hindus), Maulana Azad and Mr. Asaf Ali (Congress Moslems), Mr. Jinnah, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali and Nawab M. Ismail Khan (Moslem League), Dr. S. P. Mukerjee (Hindu Mahasabha), Mr. R. N. Dass (Bengal Scheduled Classes) and Mr. Munuswami Pillay (Madras Scheduled Classes), Sir C. Deshmukh, Governor of Reserve Bank (to be designated as Finance Member), Master Tara Singh (Sikh), Sir A. Dalal (Parsee) and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (Christian).

Highlights of July 9 revelations by the Congress President were (a) that he had not received any fresh invitation from the Viceroy, and that (b) he wanted to

reorganise the Congress.

On July 10, it was said that Azad had sent another letter to Wavell. The latter wished to meet Gandhiji and Azad (and also the League leader). However it was also reported on July 11 that the Viceroy's list of names was substantially different from that of the Congress President. Azad met the Viceroy on July 12 (the last of the meeting of the series). He was hopeful to the end, and said that before we deal with which finally proved to be barrier in the way of Azad realising his hopes, we should dwell on the main obstacle in his path—the Jinnahite and League obstructionism.

IV

JINNAH AGAIN

One swallow does not make a summer but at least it can give you some idea of what the summer would be like. If the lonesome swallow had its way, Mr. Jinnah is such a swallow of the Indian summer, buzzing about the stratosphere, and calling attention of other people to its petty, microscopic and almost futile existence. This gentleman, millionaire-politician, started disrupting conferences very long ago, and I have discussed his career at length in my various articles dealing with the League and its leader. In his pernicious role of the disrupting agent in conferences, he has, however, appeared only since 1930 and more so since 1935 when the preamble to the Government of India Act was sent up to the Commons for discussion with a view to bringing it in the shape of law (*Volker der Recht*). But till 1935, he sang a mixed song of nationalism and communalism, and like many European desperadoes of the right (since extinct in many cases) of the time talked wildly about his being in favour of a revolution. What kind of revolution it was to be? He alone could answer that. Certainly under Jinnah's leadership it could not be revolution much different from that carried out by Catholic *Falange* in Spain.

In 1936, he pitched his forces in a mighty and continuous tussle with the progressive forces of the country by setting up candidates in opposition to the Congress party. He had the worse of the pounding in this combat, which was like a round of boxing between Billy Conn and Paterson or between Joe Louis, the world heavyweight champion, and some amateur and enthusiast of Harvard

or of some similar American college or school. Backed at this game, Jinnah tried the Pirpur report, stunt, alleging discriminatory treatment accorded by the Congress to the Moslems. If it were true, it was the most serious charge imaginable that could be brought against a regime resting its authority on the consent of the governed. But it simply was not.

Then, Jinnah tried the plank of two-nation theory, and came out with a sinister move to vivisect this country. For nearly seven years now this theory has been put before the Moslem masses ; and they had enough time to judge it on its merits.

For five years since 1940, Jinnah has adopted an attitude of rigid neutrality in matter of Congress-British differences ; and the result of it is that the British have in all peace parleys given due place of honour to this Jamal Bey Hussaini. His was the trump card which Linlithgow played in his correspondence with Gandhiji, forgetting all the time that it was a strange disturbance of laws of equity to compare a politician at large and hourly gathering strength with one who was behind the bars. Nor did it occur to Jinnah, it was hitting the opponents below the belt if one were to carry on the propaganda *in absentium* against them. He was not strong enough to demand their release, and he did not want it.

When their release did take place, he was not willing to meet them himself, as indeed courtesy demanded to enquire after their health, while they were in prison : and having thus created a fine personal atmosphere to discuss political subjects. Instead he looked to the British representative to enforce judgment between him and the Congress politicians.

Wavell, finding that the Indian leaders did not get together, thought it the most propitious moment to clear up the cobwebs left behind by Sir Stafford Cripps, including the legacy of bitterness as a result of the failure of

negotiations.

The reasons which actuated the Congress leaders to play on this tricky wicket (they played well enough) are not much known. A good deal of Gandhi-Azad-Wavell correspondence is yet like the various messages exchanged between Truman, Churchill, Stalin, or Truman, Attlee, and Stalin, or Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, an unknown entity resting on the closely guarded archives in the closely guarded rooms. But one of the reasons no doubt was making the new British representative more pliable to Indian demands ; and the other to get the release of Congressmen effected.

But even so, some of us think, the same was not worth the candle, and the Congress leaders (good honest people) wasted their time at Simla. But Jinnah wasted it more.

The Congress leaders had many new things to say to the Viceroy, and hear many new things from him. Jinnah had in the interval said all that Moslem League wanted, and the British had strained their ears hearing all this.

But in spite of all this Jinnah took his plunge head-long in Simla Conference, and had by June 28, bored everybody so effectively, that it was said that at the conference on June 27, Jinnah, riding in high clouds, had declared that the Congress should take its hands off the Moslems. Dr. Khan Sabib disputed his claim but calmed down at the instance of Maulana Azad.

The Viceroy could not give any definite assurance to Mr. Jinnah on the question of Moslem nominees for the new Executive Council, as envisaged in the Wavell proposals. This was the problem which vexed Mr. Jinnah the most and even then he was not sure whether when this question came up in the conference itself, he would not insist on demanding that Moslem nominees should all be Leaguers.

Mr. Jinnah appeared to have reconciled himself to

the presence of Maulana Azad as the President of the Indian National Congress sitting in the conference.

Mr. Jinnah was left with no other choice because it was clear, that, constitutionally, if India's biggest national organisation was to be represented on the conference, it could not be represented by any one outside it, however highly placed he might be. Therefore, there could be no reasonable ground on which Mr. Jinnah could take a stand.

Those of us who know that Jinnah played similar political acrobatics at the Round Table Conference, and later in Central Assembly in the period of 1935—37, need not be surprised at his amazingly unstable attitude.

But he was determined to obstruct by all means the progress of the negotiations, and it was known on June 29, that he was not prepared to budge an inch from his position.

“With or without you, the proposals must be carried through.” This is what Lord Wavell is stated to have told Mr. Jinnah during the talks he had with him.

It is stated that this reply, which reflects the determination on the part of the Viceroy to see through his plan, is symbolical of the attitude which Lord Wavell was expected to take up if the League leader would make a statement the other day at the conference, that he could not let the Congress or any other party nominate any Moslem for the proposed Executive Council which Mr. Jinnah said was his sole right as the leader of the Moslem League, which, according to him, represented “the entire Moslem nation.”

After the statement, which Mr. Jinnah was expected to make the other day at the conference, only two courses were open to the Viceroy :

His Excellency might say that, since there had been no agreement, the major parties should accept his leadership and hand over panel of names to him and let

him select the personnel of his new Council with their advice.

If and when that was done, it was being pointed out that Mr. Jinnah might say that he would be prepared to hand over his panel provided the Viceroy would give him an undertaking to confine his selection, so far as the Moslems were concerned, to the names appearing in his panel and not select any Moslim from the panels given by the Congress or any other party.

Lord Wavell could not, of course, be expected to give any such undertaking. It was apprehended that the League President, in the absence of such an assurance forthcoming, might refuse to be a party to the submission of a panel of names.

Lord Wavell's task would then be most difficult, but having risen to the heights that he had done, he would then be expected to say to Mr. Jinnah: "With you or without you, I am going to see the plan through."

Jinnah was in agitated mood due to the rebuff of the Viceroy and he said :

" We have no illusions about this parity because on the Executive Council, as proposed, the Moslem quota will not be more than one-third and in the whole of the Executive Council Moslems will be a minority of one-third, whereas the Hindu quota will be in parity with Moslems. There will be Scheduled Castes representation and Sikh representation and we do not know yet which other community or communities will secure representation because the strength of the new Executive Council is yet to be determined.

" The Congress on any important matter will be safely entitled to count on the support of the Scheduled Castes and the Sikhs."

Mr. Jinnah added : " We are willing to make full contribution to any just and reasonable settlement. The Congress has already claimed the right to choose member

or members from the Moslem bloc and some other party or parties may make similar claims. While we have every desire to find a solution, this is a point, namely, that the Congress or any other body should be entitled to choose Moslem from the Moslem bloc is one which we cannot accept, either on principle or on facts, as they are before us."

During the course of an interview to the *Associated Press* representative, after he had talks with the League President ; Pt. Govindvallabh Pant clarified certain issues regarding the composition of the new Executive Council and dealt with fears expressed in Moslem League quarters that under the Wavell Plan the Moslems would be in a minority and thus would not get a fair deal.

Pandit Pant said : " You know the present scheme provides for parity. So the number of non-scheduled Hindus will be no more than that of the Moslems in the Council, although the actual proportion of the Hindus to Moslems is three to one. The majority community will thus be distinctly in a minority in the Executive Council.

" It is just possible that about two-thirds of the representatives in the Executive Council may consist of minorities and only one-third may belong to the majority community. In the circumstances, it is unthinkable how the latter can override the wishes of the former: In fact the majority community will be manifestly at the mercy of the minorities."

Replying to a question Pandit Pant said that he did not see that there should be a Moslem bloc as against the rest. " I personally believe," he said, " that our interests are more or less identical and we should be able to work in complete harmony. I have no reason to doubt the sincerity of the professions of the Moslem League about independence being their goal. If that be so I see no reason why fundamentally their outlook on problems as may come up from day to day should differ from other

members of the Council. There is again no justification in holding that all other members of the Council will act in concert against the Moslems. In fact all Moslems or Hindus need not hold the same view between themselves. But no council can work satisfactorily unless members are determined to work in cohesion.

"Ultimately it is the individual citizen who counts and if we are really distressed over the present state of affairs and are sincerely anxious to raise the general standard of life in this country, I personally believe that there will be no real cleavage on any communal or religious grounds inside the Council. In any case the minorities will be in a majority and the majority community whose strength is about three times that of the other minorities, will itself be in a minority in the Council and may not be more than a third of its total strength. If such a surrender by the majority community to the will and judgment of the minorities does not satisfy the latter I do not know what more can be possible. One cannot find precedent for such reduction of a majority to such a minority position anywhere in the world."

Talking of the personnel of the Executive Council Pandit Pant said that it was essential that the members nominated should be those inspired by a common desire to raise the country to a position befitting its place in the sun with due regard to her vast numbers and ancient civilisation. Passion for independence and for the improvement of the lot of average citizen should be commonly shared by all the members.

C. Rajagopalachariar also gave vent to his views in the similar terms. "I believe," he said, "something good will come out of it. But even if we fail it is a good thing that we at least tried to arrive at a settlement."

Referring to Mr. Jinnah's claim of choosing all members of the Moslem bloc in the proposed Executive Council he said the number of times that he had repeated

his same claim showed weakness of his stand. He hoped in spite of Mr. Jinnah's adamant attitude there was the possibility of a success of the conference. Mr. Rajagopalachariar expressed the view that the League's claim could either be accommodated, compromised or put aside during the purely make-shift period. He said that the long adjournment of the conference indicated eagerness of the leaders to come to a settlement and that the problems facing them were not impossible of solution.

Mr. Rajagopalachariar maintained that the present Government had got to be replaced by men of ability and influence. He felt it would not be difficult to find out such 15 or 20 men whose selection should be agreed upon by all parties. Difficulty only arose over the question of adjustment of details and such adjustment was needed only for a temporary and interim purpose. Subject to the condition that the present settlement in no way would affect the future, there should be no difficulty in coming to a worth-while conclusion. However, he said if the people thought in terms of political arithmetic instead of in terms of personalities they might fail.

But the man who benefited most from the efforts of Jinnah was Wavell. His position became stronger.

Some High Command Leaguers felt in their heart of hearts that the Qaid-i-Azam pulled the strings to the breaking point in his old style, without counting upon his host, Lord Wavell. He used all his old tricks but failed to overcome the new strategy. Lord Wavell did not give opportunity for dialectics of Mr. Jinnah, but put him in a straight waistcoat and conducted the business with military efficiency.

Mr. Jinnah hoped to have a full field, but found himself put in an iron lung. Mr. Jinnah came to Simla for clarification, elucidations, without commitment on his part. But he found the viceregal special moving to its pre-determined destination imperceptibly, but rapidly.

On the first day there was a general discussion; on the second day a further discussion and then the two days' adjournment and at the third sitting a fortnight's adjournment, the Viceroy calling for the panels.

On the whole, about eight hours' discussions at three meetings disclosed Wavell's Plan with himself at the top and leading. When he said the leadership must be his, he meant it literally and he maintained it throughout in the absence of Indian unity at the conference table.

No opportunity was given by the Viceroy for walk-outs and other demonstrations and on the whole 'take it or leave it' attitude was visible, because the Congress, tired of the League's dealings, had resigned itself to the new scheme as an interim measure with all its imperfections.

The Viceroy, while giving parity to Hindus and Moslems, had nowhere said other minorities would be only 20 per cent of the total. It was then his plan to give 5 seats or 33 per cent representation to the Scheduled Castes, Sikhs, Parsis, Indian Christians and Europeans or Anglo-Indians. He would thereby satisfy claims of all minority communities and would indicate the British Government's claim that it was their friend and had made its promises to them.

Communally and logically speaking in this process the worst sufferers were the vast majority of Hindus who had been reduced from three-fourths to one-third.

The most fair and frank comments on Jinnah's stand were made by the *Tribune* of Lahore in a leading article saying :

" Ridicule and laughter are provoked everywhere by Mr. Jinnah's claim that the Moslem League is the sole representative of the Moslem community. It has been clearly demonstrated that it is false and comic. No political party in the world, howsoever brazen-faced it may be, can, after getting only 4 or 6 per cent of the votes in a

general election, assert that it constitutes the exclusive mouthpiece of the electorate. But the Moslem League has done so. According to Prof. Himayun Kabir 'the Moslem League obtained only 4 per cent of the votes in the general election.' Prof. Himayun Kabir is a nationalist Moslem and his statement may be characterised as prejudiced. Let us then quote the evidence of an impartial observer. According to the American journalist, Mr. Edgar Snow, 'the Moslem League represents only 6 per cent of the electorate, which itself is a small fraction of the total population.' The boast and bluster, which have of late been much in evidence in League circles, were practically absent when the result of the general election was announced. For to the Jinnahian group it was an absolute damper. Not in a single province was it in a position to assume the reins of administration and in all Moslem majority provinces its political rivals—for instance, Congress Moslems and nationalist Moslems—formed ministries. As it has repeatedly asserted that it is the sole representative of the Moslem community, we have been compelled repeatedly to remind it and its supporters and dupes of this significant fact."

This was only one of the many foremost bitter comments that were to follow on the great betrayal of the League leader at a crucial moment in India's history. Next day (July 6), the papers wrote that Jinnah was still sitting on the fence, and as such the position was a hopeless one. On July 7 due to the intransigent attitude of Jinnah, it was even said that Wavell might dismiss the conference.

V

LEAGUE IN TRUE COLOURS

Jinnah's role and the part played by the *partie ad hoc* is made clear only when we examine the conduct of the entire League. The League contains many individuals, who are in some respects less bigoted than Jinnah, who have joined it simply because they thought that if they did not do it, they might be dubbed by their co-religionists as being pro-Hindu, and thus deprived of Assembly seat, Corporation membership or such paltry offices. *The League serves their interests well.*

Then there are the landed interests. Some had joined it because the Congress has and would one day grapple with the problems of the landlordism in such a way as to ease the problem of the peasant. The Congress is bound to follow such a programme. *vide* its Karachi Resolution. The League had also such a programme in its agenda at a recent Karachi session, but it has been dealt with in such a miserable way that it is shorn of much of its usefulness and the landlords, in any case, could (as they know) nullify its effects.

There are the masses, ignorant and illiterate, who follow the League, and want far-reaching political rights, before they have developed any sense of judging what those rights are. If the rest of the League were to provide amenities of education and social freedom to these people, then in a short period of time they could develop healthy political consciousness.

There is an extremely noisy and by no means less numerous section of women followers of the League, who also take part in the general chorus of praise of the

League. These women have not even rudiments of freedom, and there is no hope of the League ever granting them any.

Also Moslem Leaguers are the noisy and tub-thumping elements among the students, who think of politics much like a District Football, Hockey or Cricket Tournament, where rival teams assemble to give their display. They, therefore, try to form a miniature league of their own to oust from position of vantage in the province some other group of students owing allegiance to some other party.

All these widely conflicting interests need to be united under some common slogan. This slogan is provided by the general body of the League. It is called, whether the word means anything or nothing at all, Pakistan. And by way of solace is offered the cry that the League is representative body of all Moslems of India.

We have seen in the last chapter that Jinnah's attempts to form a provisional government at the centre (with Wavell as its *de-jure* head) on this basis were frustrated and in doing so he brought hornets' nest about his ears. But the criticism was directed against the League too, for the *Tribune* wrote on June 30 under the heading of *Let the Moslem League Stew in Its Own Juice*.

“ Whatever Indians may think about Mr. Churchill's and Mr. Amery's mentality and intention, they generally believe that Lord Wavell is sincere and earnest—that the soldier Viceroy honestly desires that India should be enabled to take a really long stride towards her goal of independence and that he is unflinchingly and ardently striving to give a practical shape to his desire. He has never accepted defeat. And he is not likely to accept defeat at Simla. He must sweep aside whoever and whatever stand between him and success. It is obvious that the Moslem League and Jinnahian intransigence are obstructing his efforts. Either he must bring round the

League and conquer the *zid* of its leader or he must ignore them and go ahead with the task of establishing a National Government at the centre.

"Mr. Jinnah's claim that the Moslem League is the sole representative of the Moslem community is unsound and untenable and it cannot become sound and tenable by sheer repetition. In the elections held under the 1935 Constitutional Reforms Act, the Moslem League completely trounced in all "Moslem majority" provinces. In the Frontier Province and the Punjab, which it later wanted to make the corner-stone of its separatist ideological castle, the defeats suffered by it were disastrous to it. In the former the Congress Moslems were completely victorious and in the latter against the Unionist Moslems only two Moslem Leaguers were elected one of whom turned his coat. There was a single Moslem League swallow left in the Punjab and that swallow could not make a Moslem League summer. In Bengal the elections resulted in the Krishak Praja Party (a nationalist Moslem organisation) achieving supremacy and in Sind they resulted in the Azad Party (another nationalist Moslem organisation) dominating the situation. Not in a single province was the Moslem League able to assume the reins of administration.

"After some initial shifting and shuffling—for which the lack of an appropriate Congress policy was mainly responsible—everywhere the nationalist Moslem elements, that had come to the forefront, became stable and firmly seized power. In Assam, which has also been claimed to be a League province by Mr. Jinnah, a Congress Ministry was formed with Mr. Bardoloi as the Premier. In Bengal the Krishak Praja Party came into power with the nationalist Muslim leader, Mr. Fazlul Huq, at the head of the administration. In Sind the Azad Moslems, led by that intrepid nationalist Moslem fighter, Mr. Allah Bakhsh, got at the helm of affairs. In the Frontier Province the

Congress 'Party formed a Cabinet of which Dr. Khan Saheb became the chief. And in the Punjab the Unionist Party was firmly installed on the ministerial pedestal. Everywhere the Moslem League was consigned to the limbo of oblivion. It emerged into prominence only after the abandonment of office by the Congress and incarceration of Congress leaders. Even then it would not have been able to seize power anywhere, had it not been helped actively by the Bureaucracy. In Bengal the Governor secured the resignation of the Premier, Mr. Fazlul Huq, by subterfuge just after he had inflicted two major defeats on the Moslem League Party in the Assembly and in Sind the Premier, Mr. Allah Bakhsh, was dismissed while he continued to enjoy the confidence of the Legislature and in both provinces after the violation of the spirit of the constitution and destruction of democratic principles Mr. Jinnah's followers were put in seats of power and authority. That was how Mr. Jinnah found himself in a position to claim that he was the sole representative of the Moslem community ! "

A further knock-out blow was given by the above paper to the Moslem League's claim to represent all Indian Moslems in the following words :

" Mr. Jinnah's influence in the Provincial Legislatures was and is bureaucracy-made. It did not and does not reflect his ' increasing popularity '. Those M. L. A.'s, who left the parties on whose tickets they were elected and joined the Moslem League Party, indeed, betrayed their constituents to serve their own personal interests. The revulsion of public feeling against Mr. Jinnah and his followers is clear from the fact that (1) in the Frontier Province the Moslem League Ministry has been thrown out and a Congress Ministry has taken its place, (2) in Bengal the Moslem League Ministry has been defeated and a nationalist Moslem would have taken its place, had Section 93 not been enforced

there, (3) in Assam the Moslem League Ministry has been dissolved and an all-parties ministry has been established in its place and (4) in Sind the Moslem League Ministry is tottering ; it has just been kept propped up by political manipulators. And yet Mr. Jinnah and his followers claim that the Moslem League is the sole representative of the Moslem community.

" Not only in the Legislatures but also outside them formidable nationalist Moslem forces, which are the real repository of the confidence of the Moslem masses, are arrayed against Mr. Jinnah and his feudal and capitalist followers. The representatives of these mighty forces have just assembled at Delhi and passed a resolution challenging the Moslem League's claim that it is the sole representative of the Moslem community. The nationalist Moslem bodies, that are arrayed against Mr. Jinnah, include the Khudai Khidmatgars, who are supreme in the Frontier Province, the Krishak Praja Party men, who wield tremendous influence in Bengal, the Azad Moslems, who are most popular in Sind, the Wattanists, who hold the field in Baluchistan and the National Conference people, who have captured the heart of the people in Kashmir. Where in what Mr. Jinnah calls ' Moslem India ' does the Moslem League stand ? Even the most powerful and representative religious organisation of Mussulmans in India, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, questions the claim of Mr. Jinnah and his followers to be the sole representative of the Moslem community. The Shias and Momins, whose number is not negligible, thoroughly distrust them. At the Simla Conference itself, to which men have been invited on a basis distinctly partial to the Moslem League—even its Deputy Leader in the Central Assembly has been invited, though the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party, Khan Abdul Qayum, has been left out—their claim to nominate all Moslem members to the Executive Council has been

challenged powerfully—it has been challenged by the President of the Indian National Congress, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Premier of the Frontier Province, Dr. Khan Saheb and the Premier of the Punjab, Malik Khizar Hayat Khan. An impartial and critical analysis of the situation reveals that Mr. Jinnah is not entitled to nominate more than one member to the Executive Council. If he and his followers continue to insist that the Moslem League has the right to nominate all Moslem members to the Executive Council, then Lord Wavell should let the League stew in its own juice and proceed with the work of transferring full power to Indians at the centre and placing the Indo-British relations on a more cordial basis without it."

At about this time an outstanding effort was made by way of exposing the unrepresentative character of the League to speak for ninety million Moslems of India. This was by Prof. Himayun Kabir (Maulana Azad's Secretary).

Prof. Himayun Kabir, in a statement to the press, said :

" In his press conference Mr. Jinnah referred to the strength of the Moslem League Party in various legislatures. A correct indication of strength can be obtained only in general elections. In the last general elections, the League obtained only 4 per cent of the Moslem votes, and no party or organisation can honestly claim members except those returned on its own ticket. Since then, there have been some by-elections but, as is well known, by-elections are no test of public support. Even then the League has not always won. In the Punjab it lost to the Unionist Party, in Dera Ghazi Khan and in Sind to Khan Bahadur Maula Bakhsh of the Azad Moslem Party.

" A district board election also offers some indication of public opinion. The electorate is almost the same as for the Assembly. In the district board election of Noakhali,

in Bengal, the League could not win more than half the Moslem seats. The electorate was no doubt joint, but it must be remembered that in Noakhali the Moslems are in an overwhelming majority and constitute about 80 per cent of the population.

"In district board elections in the Punjab, the League lost heavily in Sialkot and Sheikhupura, while it could not secure even one seat in Campbellpur.

"A more revealing instance is the last Calcutta Corporation elections. Here there was no joint electorate. It is true that the League won 17 out of 22 seats but out of the 11,000 odd Moslem votes cast, the League secured only a little over 6,000 while the votes cast against the League were well over 4,000.

"This is the nearest approach we have had to a general election in the recent past, and it is well known that the League is much stronger in towns than in rural areas.

"So far as the position in the legislatures is concerned, the League has no majority in any of the Moslem majority provinces. We threw out the League coalition ministry in Bengal in spite of the fact that it had the support of the European party and its proteges.

"The League could never have gone into office in Bengal except for gubernatorial patronage and European backing. Only 39 members were originally returned to the Bengal Assembly on the League ticket and the genuine membership of the League Party there has never exceeded 43. This was the number in opposition when Mr. Fazlul Huq formed his Progressive Coalition ministry. About thirty Moslem members in the Bengal Assembly are constant supporters of the Government irrespective of which party is in power. Obviously, they cannot be counted among members of the League or indeed of any political party.

"Nor has the League ever had a majority of the

Moslem members in the Punjab. It is the Unionist Party which claims a clear majority and is a standing refutation of all League claims.

"The position in the Frontier is still worse for the League. The League was never in a position to form a ministry except with the support of the Governor. The moment the Congress Party challenged its claim to office, it tumbled down with hardly any struggle.

"In Assam and Sind party allegiances are fluid and uncertain. Even then the present ministry in Assam can continue only so long as the Congress Party chooses to keep it in office. If the Congress Party went into opposition or even withdrew its support, Sir Mohammed Saadullah would be forced to go out.

"In Sind also, it is the toleration of the Congress Party which is keeping Sir Ghulam Hussain in office. If the Congress had chosen to support Khan Bahadur Maula Bakhsh, it would have been he and not Sir Ghulam Hussain who would have represented Sind in the conference today.

"Of the four Moslem majority provinces, the Frontier is represented today in the conference by a member of the Congress and the Punjab by a member of the Unionist Party. Sind is represented by Sir Ghulam Hussain, who holds his office at the pleasure of the Congress Party in the legislature and has often changed his allegiance. The position of the Premier of Assam is identical with that of Sind.

"Bengal alone is represented by a member of the League but he has hardly the right to speak on behalf of the province after his decisive defeat in the legislature."

The Shias dissociated themselves from the League. Mirza Afat Hussain, General Secretary, All-India Shia Political Conference, asked for due representation for Shias and protection of their religious rights, as distinct

from the rights claimed by the Moslem League.

In a statement issued by him after the meeting which he and other leading Shias had with Mr. Hossainbhai Laljee, Mirza Afat Hussain said :

" Shias from all over the country have unanimously supported representation made by Mr. Hossainbhai and have authorised him to proceed on their behalf with the matter. Shia Ulemas, including our revered Mujahids, by their resolution, have unanimously made it clear that judging from the hostile attitude adopted by the Sunnis especially, their press, they are convinced that Shia religious faith and tenets are in jeopardy, and the League being almost entirely composed of Sunnis have all along neglected Shia representation and injured Shia case even at a time when Shia-Sunni riots were occurring ; therefore Shias can have no faith in it.

" It is now for those very few Shias, who in their individual capacity, are still in the League, either to act upon their religious duty, and according to our revered religious leaders' injunctions join in the demand for protection of Shia rights, or to act as agents of Sunnis through their organisation, the League, in utter disregard of their religious and public duty towards their own community.

" Under the circumstances, I feel it my duty to point out that it should be the care of H.E. the Viceroy and all parties to see that the Shia minority is given due representation and protection to which they have all along pledged themselves.

" The three crores of Shias of India fear that if they are not protected they may forsake all franchise or choose the general constituency if they feel they may have a chance there rather than be pushed into a fold where there is no place for them as it is."

Released after two and a half years of detention, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had been made to say that there

were many Moslems who did not follow the League although he estimated that the League had grown in strength in the years. To a well-informed observer, the League would appear just in the contrary light. The League had gradually come very nearly on the verge of extinction when a new lease of life was given to it by Mr. Rajagopalachariar and subsequently by Gandhiji's visit to Mr. Jinnah. We cite the following facts from which the reader will be able to draw his own conclusions about the strength of the League. Unguarded statements about the League's strength by leaders of the Congress has always helped this communal body in consolidating its strength and it will be for the good of the country if they ascertain facts before making any statement on the position of the League.

Quoting from the *Modern Review*, the results of the general elections in 1937 revealed the following strength of the League in the Provincial Legislatures :

Province	League	Other Moslem Groups
Madras	11	17
Bombay	20	9
Bengal	40	79
United Provinces	27	37
Punjab	1	83
Bihar	Nil	39
C.P.	"	14
Assam	9	25
N.-W.F.P.	Nil	26
Orissa	"	4
Sind	"	36
	108	379

With the formation of Congress Ministries in eight provinces, the Moslem malcontents naturally rallied under

the League. The results of Moslem by-election for Central and Provincial Legislatures between 1938 and 1942 indicated some accession of strength and were as follows :

Legislatures	Number of Elections	Moslem League	Other Moslem Groups
Central	6	4	2
Madras	1	1	Nil
Bombay	4	3	1
Bengal	13	12	1
U.P.	7	4	3
Punjab	12	Nil	12 (Unionist)
Bihar	4	4	Nil
C.P.	2	2	"
Assam	1	Nil	1
Sind	2	1	1 (Congress)
N.-W.F.P.	4	3	"
	56	34	22

In popular propaganda, both by the League and the Imperialists, the 12 Punjab seats were included in the League lists and thus it was shown as if the League had won 46 seats out of 56. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan never signed the Moslem League creed nor did any other member of his party do so. Since his death, under Malik Khizar Hayat Khan, and after the Shaukat Hayat Khan episode the Punjab has lost even the loose friendship that prevailed during the lifetime of Sir Sikandar.

Much change, since then, has taken place in the history of the League. It is ridden with quarrels and differences, specially in U.P., Sind and Bengal. Mr. Jinnah was openly flouted by League leaders like Sir Sultan Ahmed who refused to come out of the Viceroy's Council when ordered by him to do so. He was expelled. Sir Azizul Huque accepted office at the Viceroy's Council

in defiance of the League resolution. He was however not punished. Sir Firoz Khan Noon, Sir Mohammed. Usman, etc., are all given out as League stalwarts. This is for the centre.

In the provinces the condition is worse. In Bengal, League succeeded in smuggling itself into power through the tactics of Sir John Herbert and in coalition with the Europeans. It has since been ousted from office. In Assam, a League coalition formed the ministry when the Congress coalition resigned but it could not maintain itself in power for long. It has since formed a new coalition and is holding office through sufferance of the Congress. In the N.W.F.P. a League Ministry came into power only to be ousted shortly afterwards by the Congress. In Sind, similarly, the League-Coalition Ministry is tottering and one of the League leaders is trying to share power with the Congress and make a complete reorientation of the League there along lines so long followed by the Congress.

However the League Working Committee was still playing its cards well, and by July 9 the League Leader was still meeting the Viceroy and on July 10 it was known that the League Leader had adopted bargaining tactics and refused to submit the panel to the Viceroy. On the 11th it was found that there was rift in League circles. There were several Moslem Leaguers, who were in favour of working the Wavell Plan. It was said that many of the Moslem Leaguers having basked in the sunshine of official and bureaucratic favours, found it difficult to go into wilderness. These men would, said the press people, join the Executive Council if called upon to do so. The story of wheels within wheels in Moslem League politics was summed up in the following words :

“ It is learnt that at the meeting at which Mr. Jinnah discussed the attitude that he wanted to adopt with regard to the Wavell proposals and the submission of a

panel of names by him on behalf of the Moslem League, there was a sharp difference of opinion among the members. At least half a dozen of them definitely opposed Mr. Jinnah's attitude and wanted that the League Leader should submit his panel to the Viceroy. Ultimately, however, on an appeal being made by Mr. Jinnah to all the members of the League Working Committee, this opposition was withdrawn.

" It is understood that Mr. Jinnah has taken up his present attitude because he feels that in case he joined the Congress in forming a National Government at the centre even though for the interim period, his theory of Pakistan would be exploded, because the League would, in that case, not be able to carry on a vendetta against the Congress in order to justify his demand for Pakistan. Mr. Jinnah, therefore, feels that it would be better for him to remain out even though some of his close colleagues of the Working Committee feel that he may come round before the Simla Conference re-assembles on July 14.

" Mr. Jinnah has, it is understood, been responsible for creating a gulf between himself and Lord Wavell by taking up the present attitude which the Viceroy has not been able to appreciate.

" It is reported that the Viceroy was not prepared to give any assurance to Mr. Jinnah with regard to the choice of the Moslem nominees although he was willing to discuss Mr. Jinnah's list with Maulana Azad and Mahatma Gandhi with a view to finding out a way for a settlement. Mr. Jinnah is reported to have been unwilling and in a way challenged Lord Wavell to adopt his own course. Even at present interested League circles are creating an impression that if they were left out they would resort to direct action which would affect the war effort. However, official circles are not prepared to attach any importance to such a propaganda.

"The Central Parliamentary Board of the Moslem League held a meeting here and discussed the position of the Moslem League parties in the Assam Assembly and the N.W.F.P. Assembly with Sir Saadullah, the Premier of Assam, and Mr. Abdul Rabb Nishtar, ex-Finance Minister of N.W.F.P."

Associated Press of India adds: "Late on Tuesday night it was learned that the Moslem League Working Committee has been called to meet at 11 a.m. on Wednesday.

"Observers here regard this as a significant development which relates to the report which has been current throughout today that the Viceroy has been in communication with Whitehall on the situation arising from the Moslem League Working Committee's decision. Moslem League circles expect 'important developments' in the course of two or three days."

But Mr. Jinnah was still all powerful, and the various classes of Moslems constituting the League found in him the only man, who could link them together.

It was only after the dispersal of the conference that more frank criticism of League was available. There was no doubt in the minds of the observers that it was still very much communal in outlook.

The press congratulated Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on his statement made in a conference held in Lahore, after the dispersal of the Simla Conference, in which he pointed out that Pakistan was a theoretically inconceivable proposition, and that it would be no solution of the communal problem even if it were otherwise. Not that there was anything new in what Pandit Jawaharlal said, anything that had not been said again and again by others. The views expressed by Pandit Jawaharlal have, in fact, been the views of all true nationalists and of all Congress-minded men and women ever since the cry of Pakistan was raised. What lent peculiar importance and value

to Pandit Jawaharlal's statement on the occasion was that for one reason or another Congress leaders of the first rank had been chary of giving clear and emphatic expression to these views. Not only so. Both by their utterly illogical and absurd resolution about neither accepting nor rejecting the Communal Award and by their ceaseless efforts to come to a settlement with the Moslem League even after its leaders had publicly and unequivocally declared that Pakistan was an article of faith with them, the Congress leaders had created a widespread impression both in India and abroad that the unity and indivisibility of India was no longer one of those matters in respect of which they would or could accept no compromise. In spite of the unnecessarily guarded language in which Pandit Jawaharlal couched his views and sentiments his statement served better to remove this impression.

Unlike millions of his countrymen Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had no sentimental aversion to the idea of Pakistan. His approach to the problem is that of a political realist, and as a political realist he urges three fundamental objections to the proposed division of India into Hindusthan and Pakistan. These are : (1) that the underlying idea of Pakistan, that of a religious group wielding political power and authority in a State, is essentially mediæval and anti-modern ; (2) that in a divided India both States would be weak, like Iraq and Iran, which, in fact, were not sovereign States, but satellite powers, which stood at the mercy of great nations ; and (3) that Pakistan would be no solution of the communal problem, because in both the zones there would be minority communities, whose conciliation would be as difficult a task as the conciliation of the minority communities in the present undivided India. The first two objections need no emphasising or even explaining. The third was explained by Pandit Jawaharlal at some length. " The League," he said, " can demand separation only of those areas where the Moslems

are in an overwhelming majority. It must be remembered that this means the division of the Punjab and Bengal. You cannot ask the people of those areas of Bengal and the Punjab where non-Moslems are in a majority to go with Pakistan. Will the Punjabees or Bengalees, whether Moslems or Hindus, like their provinces which are homogeneous, linguistic units, to be divided ? " The question has only to be put to be answered. In Bengal, moreover, the Moslems belong to the same racial stock as the non-Moslems, more than 95 per cent of them having been converted from Hinduism. Is a change of religion, as Mahatma Gandhi pertinently asked Mr. Jinnah in the course of his recent talks with him, to mean a change of nationality or of political allegiance ? Further, both in Bengal and the Punjab the non-Moslems are very nearly equal to the Moslems numerically. If India as a whole must be divided at the bidding of the 22 or 23 per cent Moslems, how can any one resist the demand of the 45 per cent non-Moslems in Bengal and the Punjab for the division of those provinces ? Lastly, the only two provinces in which the Muslems have a large majority are the Frontier Province and Sind ; and of these while the first has always repudiated the Pakistani ideal, in the second the anti Pakistanist Moslems were until recently admittedly in a majority, and even now the claim of the Pakistanists to be in a majority remains unsubstantiated. And what of the Hindu majority provinces ? If the Moslems are a separate nation, and as such are entitled to form and to live in a separate State, on what basis and with what reason or propriety does Mr. Jinnah leave the millions of Moslems who live in these provinces at the mercy of the Hindus of whom he is so supremely distrustful ?

VI

BONE OF CONTENTION

The tug of war carried on between the League and the Congress had one main motive and that was the Congress wanted the Executive Council to be of representative character ; the League wanted it to be subservient to the League high priests.

The Viceroy, on the other hand, wanted an early end of the Indian imbroglio, and restoration of pax Britannica in a regime which has fast become autonomous or semi-autonomous since 1930. These conflicting feelings were best expressed by Kalinath Ray who said :

" Never in India's recent political history were the large majority of Indian nationalists torn by such conflicting feelings and desires as they are at this moment with regard to the latest British proposals for the resolution of the Indian deadlock and the conference that is being held at Simla to consider them. On the one hand they wish with all their heart that the conference may succeed in its professed object, for there is no other or better way by which the deadlock, which has done and is doing incalculable harm to India, can be ended immediately. On the other hand they wish equally whole-heartedly that the success of the conference and the consequent resolution of the present deadlock may not prove to be the starting point of another and perhaps a bigger and more disastrous deadlock. The possibility of such a deadlock has already been foreshadowed. The Hindu Mahasabha, which has never been a negligible body in Indian politics and which today is second to no other political body in India with the exception of the Congress in its influence, its authority,

and its representative character, has made a vehement protest both against the proposals of His Majesty's Government and the composition of the Simla Conference. It has warned all concerned that if the proposals were accepted by the conference and given effect to, those represented by it would do everything in their power to combat and to resist them.

"As I have said already, an interim Government would be a contribution to the solution of the deadlock, if and only in so far as it could pave the way either directly or indirectly, either immediately or ultimately, to a final settlement of the constitutional problem. In the present case the proposals for the formation of an interim Government are in their very nature such that so far from leading to a final and permanent settlement, they are bound to make such a settlement immeasurably more difficult, if not actually impossible. Communal representation, as experience has conclusively shown, is one of those evils to which you could never give an inch without its taking an ell. One need not go beyond the history of the famous Congress-League agreement itself for abundant and irrefutable evidence in support of this statement. That agreement only conceded to the Moslems the right of separate representation in the Legislatures. And yet the agreement had been at work only for a couple of years or so, when there arose a vociferous cry in all League quarters for communal representation from top to bottom in every department of organised life—in the Executive, in the services, in the local bodies, even in universities and educational institutions. Ultimately it led to that demand for the actual division of India into two or more independent sovereign States on a religious basis, of which so many of those who originally sported with the idea of communal representation are so mightily afraid. The plain truth is that once the British Government and the rest of political India accept the pernicious principle of

communal representation in the Supreme Executive Government with parity of representation for Moslems and a community three times as strong numerically as themselves, that principle will become a fixture in Indian constitution from which India would find no way of escape except through a revolution. That is why some of us have been warning all concerned with all the sincerity and earnestness we can command against forming the interim Government in India on the basis of a religious division made worse by the proposed parity of representation between communities which are wholly unequal and the denial of adequate representation to other minority communities. We do hope that this warning will yet be heeded."

This conflict was accentuated by the League leaders who insisted on parity scheme.

This Lord Wavell was unable to concede. Lord Wavell had in fact shown great political wisdom by refusing to give an assurance to Mr. Jinnah that the Moslem nominees to the Executive Council would be chosen exclusively from his list. Indeed, no Viceroy could give this kind of assurance after the pretensions of Mr. Jinnah to represent the Moslem community had been so thoroughly exposed at the conference. Not only did the Moslem League not represent the provinces like the Punjab and the N.-W.F. Province, but it had an uneasy hold even on a province like Sind. In Bengal its Ministry had fallen and in Assam an all-parties Ministry was functioning. These realities could not be brushed aside. Equally wise and tactful was His Excellency's action in not allowing Mr. Jinnah to make a statement at the conference. Had he allowed him to make a statement it would have only led to statements from other members and in this welter of statements the cause of the conference could not have been advanced. But what Mr. Jinnah could not say at the conference he said at a press conference he held in Simla the same evening. The holding of the

conference was fully characteristic of the League Leader but what he said at the conference could not enhance his reputation for either far-sightedness or constructive statesmanship ; it would alienate from him the sympathies of other minorities in the country. Till then Mr. Jinnah had been haunted by the fear of the Hindus dominating the politics of the country while then he was haunted by the fear of the Scheduled Castes and the Sikhs making common cause with the Congress. But why should not the minorities align themselves with a political organisation if they thought that to do so was in their interests ? Would he suppress them or deprive them of their rights simply because he smelled a rat ? Mr. Jinnah, we are sorry to say, was moving from one absurdity to another. He threw all canons of fairplay and justice to the winds. His position was thoroughly untenable. If he laid aside the false idea of personal prestige and viewed the problem in a dispassionate manner he would not find it difficult to realise that what the interests of the Moslems demand was that they should co-operate with other communities and work for the salvation of India. But this was not likely to be realised by the League Leader who by his obduracy was doing the greatest harm both to his community and the country. If the Working Committee of the Moslem League was of the same mind as its Leader then the Viceroy must prepare himself to proceed with the task of reconstructing the Central Government with the co-operation of other parties bypassing the League. With the League, if possible, and without it, if necessary, was the only attitude that Lord Wavell could adopt at that moment.

Earlier it had been observed that Wavell encouraged Jinnah in his shoutings for the moon. But certainly he could not forget his own policy in the matter. He had to satisfy the demands of the Punjab, and he had also to pay due attention to what Premier Khan Saheb of

N.-W.F.P. had to say in the matter, when he had summoned, and thus *ipso facto* recognised his popularity in N.-W.F.P. He had also to bear in mind the fact that Maulana Azad was not only President of the Congress, but also leader of the nationalist Moslems : and he had talked to him keeping his two roles in view.

The Sikhs and the Hindu Sabhaites and the Scheduled Castes had also to be satisfied while one seat should go to the Parsees, and he should have one nominee of his own. This left only seven seats, which could be divided among the Congress and the League, the Punjab and the Frontier Province getting separate representation. Out of this further total of five seats the Congress (according to probable Wavell reckoning) might have three, and the League two. But this could satisfy neither the Congress nor the League. The Congress would have wanted at least one seat more for a nationalist Moslem while the League could have nothing less than six seats.

Also the Congress as majority party wanted to select other names, if possible, of League members too. But the Congress was not allowed to have its way. Wavell had cut short the demands of Jinnah, but he could not proceed further. The Congress was prepared to let the League alone and form the Government as Azad observed at a Press Conference in Calcutta on July 20.

He declared that if Lord Wavell had adopted a firm attitude, the Moslem League would have ultimately come in. But even if the League had stayed out, a representative and popular Government would have been formed at the centre and worked successfully.

Proceeding Maulana Azad said if such a government had been formed at the centre the admitted evils from which the country was now suffering,—bribery corruption and administrative inefficiency,—would have been largely eradicated. If men at the top were incorruptible and enjoyed the confidence of the people, a great deal

could have been achieved even with the existing machinery.

Maulana Azad said the Simla Conference had done one good thing in making the people believe that the British Government meant business, though the good effect of the Wavell offer had been partially neutralised by the manner conference ended, which tended to revive the old suspicion that the communal division was made a plea for holding no political progress of India. Lord Wavell had already stated that he could not accept the League's claim as justified ; and if this was so, the Maulana thought there was no justification for allowing the conference to fail on account of an admittedly unreasonable demand of one party in spite of agreement of all other parties.

Replying to a question as to whether the Congress would join, "if invited to participate in the present Executive Council," Maulana Azad said the Congress could not accept it as they did not believe that much good would come of it. But if the whole Executive Council was reconstituted with the Congress co-operation, it would present a picture entirely different from the present position. The Congress could not enter the present Executive Council. It had to be changed wholesale in the spirit of the Wavell offer.

Referring to the release of political prisoners the Congress President said the question had been disturbing his mind ever since his release and he felt any delay in arriving at a satisfactory solution of the question was bound to lead to a deterioration of the situation.

But if the Congress were to form the government, it would not have done that on communal basis, allocating portfolios as on Wavell reckoning. It would have divided responsibilities according to merits. On that basis Moslems might achieve parity to other members. The British representatives like Minto, Harding, Irwin and the others

before him thought in terms of communal representation. And, now referring to the present point of issue, it must be said with regret that the British Government themselves had apparently, though perhaps unwillingly, played into the hands of the League by inviting the Congress to a conference, the primary function of which was to advise the Viceroy regarding the formation of an Executive Council, which would be representative of the main communities and would include equal proportions of Caste Hindus and Moslems. The Congress leaders were incontestably right in maintaining that the Congress could have nothing to do with the formation of an Executive Council, which was to be constituted on a communal basis, as the Executive Council was proposed to be constituted in the present case. Further, as Mahatma Gandhi pertinently observed, if the Government sought advice as to who could best represent the Hindus as a community, it should have invited the Hindu Mahasabha and not the Congress to participate in the conference. It is quite obvious that the firm stand taken by the Congress in this matter has made the British Government realise its mistake and though the idea of parity of representation between non-Scheduled Caste Hindus and Moslems still persists, the Viceroy has by his clarification of the intention of the British Government taken the sting out of the original proposal so far at any rate as the Congress is concerned. The Congress has in effect been told that there is nothing to prevent it from suggesting the names of persons other than non-Scheduled Caste Hindus out of its own members and that further it can suggest names from outside its own tabernacle. It was the recognition of this principle, for which the Congress had been contending from the first, and its acceptance by the Viceroy, which removed the initial difficulty in the path of the Congress co-operation.

But the conciliation of the Congress necessarily meant

estrangement of the League. If the Congress retained its national non-communal character in the eyes of the Government and the world, then one essential part of the League plan was necessarily frustrated. It was for this reason that the League leaders never liked the idea of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad being called upon to represent the Congress. They had the sense to see that it was absurd to represent as an organisation of Caste Hindus, a body which had voluntarily elected a Moslem as its leader and spokesman on a momentous occasion in its own and in the country's history. For once Mr. Jinnah and his League were completely outwitted and outmanœuvred, though the idea of outwitting and outmanœuvring the League was absent from the minds of the Congress leaders, who only carried out their traditional and lifelong policy in acting as they did. The worst of it from the point of view of the League was that it could not openly and publicly resent the action of either the Congress leaders or the Viceroy. One had the indisputable right to be represented by whomsoever it liked. It was equally indisputably the duty of the other to invite to the conference the elected leader of the greatest and most representative political organisation of India. All the more was it his duty to do so, because it was after all the differences between the Congress and the British Government that were primarily responsible for the creation of the deadlock, which it was the professed object of the Simla Conference to resolve. Not to have allowed the Congress to be represented at the conference by the leader of its choice would on the face of it have been not only unreasonable and undemocratic but in the highest degree inexpedient, because it would have completely frustrated the very purpose of the conference.

The Congress, which was so often in the past accused of non-co-operation and obstruction, has in the present case publicly declared that its policy is constructive and

not destructive and is by general consent doing everything in its power to insure the success of the conference, so far as the success of the conference would accelerate the country's march to its goal of constitutional independence. With the Moslem League itself it has tried its level best to come to an agreement, though there never was much hope of such an agreement being reached.

Whether the Viceroy did or did not say to Jinnah "with or without you, Mr. Jinnah, I shall try to see my proposals through." If he maintained the same attitude on and after the 6th July, when he has called for lists of their nominees from the several parties, the conference need not prove a failure, merely because one single party may non-co-operate or obstinately adhere to its impossible demands. Of course, the actual success of the conference would depend upon other things than merely a desire or a determination not to encourage League obstructiveness. "It would depend," says Kalinath Ray, "first, upon the Congress and other parties adopting a national, democratic and statesmanlike attitude in their selection of names and secondly, upon the Viceroy himself making his final selection from the lists submitted to him keeping in mind India's present and future well-being and having an earnest desire to expedite her advance to the goal of independent and self-governing nationhood." Mahatma Gandhi said the other day that if he were the Viceroy, he would select only the topmost men, best fitted to discharge the duties entrusted to them and that so far as the Congress was concerned, it would not confine its choice of names to its own members. The Mahatma could not have made a more helpful suggestion.

Whatever was the final outcome of the Simla Conference, the Congress collected bouquets for the excellent role it played in the drama. Both in and outside the conference it had displayed that constructive genius and patriotism which are rare in such political organisations

in other countries. It showed the subordination of party interests of the country to an extent that has almost been unprecedented in political history. The panel of the names for the Executive Council it submitted to the Viceroy included many who were outside the fold of the Congress. It did this because it had been actuated by the sole desire to have the best possible Indians to run the administration of the country at a time when profiteers and racketeers were infesting the land and corruption had penetrated even the public services. At such a moment to have treated the question of the formation of a new Executive Council as a narrow party issue would have been to betray the interests of the long-suffering common man who has ever been the backbone of government and political organisation.

But in spite of the best efforts of the Congress to secure non-communal representation in the Congress, the conference failed ; and thus the Congress hopes to end Section 93 rule in provinces were for the time being held in check. They could not get engaged in nation-building work.

VII

THE BUBBLE BURSTS

The last to meet the Viceroy were Dr. Rajendra Prasad, one of the greatest authorities in the world on amenities problem and Dr. Khan Saheb. Lord Wavell told Dr. Rajendra Prasad that the conference had failed. The next day, the Viceroy made a public avowal of his views. He said :

" I must give the conference an account of what had happened since we adjourned on 29th June. As you know, my original intention was that the conference should agree upon the strength and composition of the Executive Council and that thereafter parties should send me lists of names. To these lists I would, if necessary, have added names of my own and attempted to form on paper an Executive Council that might be acceptable to His Majesty's Government, myself and the conference. I intended to discuss my selection with the leaders and finally to put them to the conference.

" Unfortunately the conference was unable to agree about the strength and composition of the Executive Council and on the 29th June I undertook, with the approval of the conference, to endeavour to produce a solution not based on any formula agreed in advance. I asked the parties to let me have lists of names, and said I would do what I could to produce a solution acceptable to the leaders and to the conference.

" I received lists from all parties represented here except from the European group, who decided not to send a list, and the Moslem League. I was, however, determined that the conference should not fail until I had

made every possible effort to bring it to a successful ending. I, therefore, made my provisional selections, including certain Moslem League names, and I have every reason to believe that if these selections had been acceptable here they would have been acceptable to His Majesty's Government.

" My selections would, I think, have given a balanced and efficient Executive Council whose composition would have been reasonably fair to all parties. I did not find it possible, however, to accept the claims of any party in full. When I explained my solution to Mr. Jinnah he told me that it was not acceptable to the Moslem League and he was so decided that I felt it would be useless to continue the discussion. In the circumstances I did not show my selection as a whole to Mr. Jinnah and there was no object in showing them to the leaders. The conference has, therefore, failed. Nobody can regret this more than I do myself. I wish to make it clear that the responsibility for the failure is mine, the main idea underlying the conference was mine. If it had succeeded its success could have been attributed to me and I cannot place the blame for its failure upon any of the parties.

" I ask the party leaders to accept this view and to do all they can to ensure that there are no recriminations. It is of the utmost importance that this effort to secure agreement between the parties and communities should not result in a worsening of communal feeling. I ask you all to exercise the greatest possible restraint.

" I have now to consider the next steps. I must remind you that whatever happens the first two of three tasks mentioned in my broadcast—the prosecution of the war against Japan and the carrying on the administration and preparation of post-war development—must be performed by the Government of India for the time being in office. It will be my duty to see that these tasks are performed with the greatest energy that I can impose and I cannot

permit any hindrance to them.

" I propose to take a little time to consider in what way I can best help India after the failure of the conference. You can help best by refraining from recrimination. The war against Japan must be carried on and law and order must be maintained ; and until I see my way more clearly than I do now, it may be difficult, perhaps impossible, to suggest any new move. No Government can carry on under the daily prospect of change or dissolution. I have to secure the stability and day-to-day efficiency of my Government and it would be impossible to enter upon continuous or even frequent political discussions of this kind. Whatever decision His Majesty's Government may take in the near future must, therefore, in all probability hold good for some little time.

" I thank you all for the help you have given me and for the restrained patience and understanding you have shown. Do not any of you be discouraged by this setback. We shall overcome our difficulties in the end. The future greatness of India is not in doubt."

Maulana Azad, who is previously quoted as having declared himself in favour of representative all-parties administration, addressed a press conference soon after the breakdown of the Simla Conference. A large number of pressmen, including Indians and foreign journalists—British, American, Australian, Chinese, were huddled together in a room in " Armsdell " where he addressed the conference in Urdu. For the benefit of foreign journalists, Maulana Azad's remarks were translated by Mr. J.N. Sahni and Professor Humayun Kabir.

After having reviewed the whole situation beginning from the date of the release of the Congress, the Working Committee members and the publication of the Wavell Plan, Maulana Azad said that immediately after release he found that at the Bombay meeting of the Working

Committee he and his other colleagues were of the same view and they were agreed on this point that if they could, in keeping with principles of the Congress, work the constitution within its frame-work in a manner which would take them, towards the goal which they had before them, they should agree to work it out. It was, therefore, in that spirit that they had decided to accept the invitation to the Wavell Conference and he came to Simla where during the course of the interview with the Viceroy he placed some of the points which were raised by the Working Committee and he asked for their clarification from Lord Wavell. Amongst these points one was as to what would be the scope of the portfolio of the new member of the External Affairs and whether or not the present wall which existed between the Indian Army and the Indian people was going to be removed because at present neither the Indian soldier thought that he had anything to do with the Indian people nor the Indian people thought that the Indian Army was a national army. Of all the points that he had placed before His Excellency the Congress President said in general the clarification that was made by the Viceroy was satisfactory. He, therefore, decided to participate in the conference and asked other Congress invitees to do so and at the conference itself he placed the Congress position with regard to the matters which were before the conference for decision.

Reviewing hurriedly what happened at the conference and what discussion took place which, however, he said was all confidential. Maulana Azad said he was not prepared to say anything about them. He promised that he would release the correspondence which passed between him and the Viceroy and the discussion which took place at the conference after he receives the assent from Lord Wavell whom he has written to agree to let these be released to the press. However, the Congress President said that two points arose out of the whole

thing as it stood today after the failure of the conference was announced. The first point was that the Moslem League attitude is responsible for the failure and secondly after the League's unwillingness to accept the Wavell Plan as placed by Lord Wavell before Mr. Jinnah it was for His Excellency to decide whether he would go ahead with his proposals or not. Lord Wavell decided not to go ahead and stopped where he was. Maulana Azad said that he would repeat what he said at the conference that the British Government could not shirk the responsibility for the communal situation in the country and so long as the third party existed in India such pawns in the chess-board would continue to be available in India. Maulana Azad added that they would decide today or tomorrow between themselves whether there was any way of accepting and finding a reasonable and fair basis on which to build up their future and maintain it. They must, after building up that basis, march forward and those who would like to accompany would be welcome and those who would like to be left behind would be left behind. There was no other alternative course. With a wavering mind or a faltering step no one could make any advance. So long as a step had not been taken ahead it was good to think before the step was taken but once the step was taken any hesitation would mean not a virtue but a weakness. If the British Government was genuinely desirous of giving shape to things they should have realised that the communal situation existed in India and they should not have surrendered the right of veto to one man who obstructed the path of progress which other parties wanted to follow. But whatever had happened was before them and it would be easy for the world outside to judge on whose doors the responsibility lay. So far as the Congress was concerned it was prepared to take up responsibility of administration. There was nothing for

which any one might have to regret.

Answering a question from a British journalist Maulana Azad said there was no doubt that while the League was responsible for the present failure of the Simla Conference the British Government was responsible generally for its breakdown.

Answering another question why did the Congress accept to join the conference when they knew that the third party was there, Maulana Azad said it was true that they accepted the invitation but he did not think that any one group would be given the right of veto and it should have been seen by the Viceroy himself before that the attitude of a particular group was so unreasonable. He should have put a limit to that obstruction more particularly when all the other parties were unanimous in agreeing to work the Wavell proposals.

Answering another question how could the League attitude be described as unreasonable, Maulana Azad said : " After all everything has to be measured in this world by some sort of standard and if they were to judge the claim of the League to represent the entire Moslem community of India they would find that there were four Moslem majority provinces which are not with the League. The Frontier Province was a Congress province, the Punjab was a Unionist province. Sind was at the mercy of the Congress Party and if the 7 Congress members after coming out of jail had not supported Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah he would have gone out of office and Maula Bux would have been in office. Similarly Sir M. Saidullah was holding office at the mercy of the Congress Party.

Replying to another question what the Congress would do if Lord Wavell would give effect to what he had said in his today's speech, that he would take some steps for helping India towards the goal which he had mentioned in his broadcast, Maulana Azad

said that if and when it happened and any step was taken by the Viceroy the Congress attitude would be of help and co-operation.

Maulana Azad addressed the conference for an hour and a half.

The following are some of the extracts from the account of the interview given by the *Associated Press of India* :

The Congress President explained the reasons for the Congress participation in the conference. "The proposals were presented to us suddenly. On June 15, I and my colleagues were released and we had to take a decision straightway on the plan. You can realise our difficulties. We were thrown into a new world and despite the difficulties the Working Committee decided to participate in the conference. We realised that vast changes had taken place in the international sphere and those changes had undoubtedly repercussions on the Indian problem. In one hop and in a few years the world had traversed centuries. A new world was emerging. The inevitable result of those changes has been to bring to the forefront the question of Indian freedom and that of the Asiatic countries. We are very near our goal and the next stage is the goal itself. It does not matter at all what are the intentions of the British Government.

"The Congress is essentially a national organisation and it cannot possibly be a party to any arrangement, however interim and temporary it may be, that prejudices its national character, tends to impair the growth of nationalism or reduces it directly or indirectly to a communal body."

Amplifying his observation on the South-East Asia countries the Congress President said that so far as the present situation was concerned, if the new arrangement had been successfully reached the war against Japan

would have become not Britain's war against Japan but India's war against Japan. There could not be two opinions as regards the question of liberating countries in South-East Asia. It would be the duty of the new Government of India to carry on the war against Japan ceaselessly till those countries were liberated but if it was the desire and intention of the powers that those countries should be restored to *status quo* then surely the new Indian Government would not be a party to it. They would not permit a single Indian soldier or the expenditure of a single pie for the *status quo* of the South-East Asia countries.

" You must remember that as far as we are affecting the fundamental principle, we were prepared to accommodate the Moslem League but Mr. Jinnah took up an uncompromising attitude."

* * * *

The Congress President explained to the press conference the various issues on which he had sought clarification from His Excellency and said : " I can say that the replies received from the Viceroy were satisfactory."

The issues on which he sought further light were :

(a) The scope and function of the proposed External Affairs Department.

(b) Every possible effort should be made to give a national character to the Indian Army and to bring about cordiality between the National Army and the National Government and the people. The present barriers isolating them will of course have to go.

(c) After the present war in South-East Asia, it must be clearly understood that the Indian Government cannot support any policy aimed at the continuation of imperialist control of any of the countries of South-East Asia nor can it allow the use of Indian resources for the deprivation of freedom of

any of these countries.

(d) In regard to the Indian States, while recognising that during the interim period, the powers of the Crown Representative will continue, it is clear that the National Government will have to deal with many matters which overlap and have concern with the States in regard to trade, industry, labour, etc.

(e) Further barriers between the States' peoples, the Princes and members of the National Government and their associates should be removed so as to help in mutual discussions, consultations and consideration of common problem and their solution.

* * * *

The Simla Conference has proved a fiasco, and it goes without any doubt that the fault is largely that of the League, which has taken up a thoroughly unreasonable attitude, and partly that of Lord Wavell, who has failed to confront the situation, created by the League intransigence, with firmness. Mr. Jinnah's intransigence, as Mr. Rajagopalachariar has pointed out, was expected. But it was not expected that Lord Wavell would be diverted from his purpose by the intransigence of any one political party. Mr. Rajagopalachariar is expressing the views of most of his countrymen when he says that "we had understood that Lord Wavell was prepared to face the situation if Mr. Jinnah chose to stay out." If, indeed, the Viceroy was not free to act without carrying Mr. Jinnah with him, he would have saved himself and the party leaders much trouble if before calling the conference he had obtained Mr. Jinnah's consent. We have little doubt that if the Viceroy had told the delegates that he would move only if Mr. Jinnah would move, most of them would not have cared to attend the conference.

"Lord Wavell would not deny," says the *Tribune* of Lahore, "that the League attitude was most unreasonable.

He himself refused to accept its claim that it was the sole representative of the Moslems. But when it came to facing the situation created by Mr. Jinnah's refusal to co-operate with him we regret to say that he failed to rise to the occasion. Instead of going ahead with firmness and determination he abandoned the enterprise that was so rich in promise and had aroused hopes all over the country. Lord Wavell does not seem to have fully realised that by refusing to move without the League he has vested in that organisation the right to veto the advance of India. If any single organisation is to be allowed to torpedo plans framed by all other parties in the country one must bid good-bye to hopes of all progress. The Viceroy's action is not saving the conference from the wreckers is calculated neither to smooth the path of future negotiations nor to reinforce belief in the British Government's intentions to liberate India. In fact, it would strengthen the theory that the Wavell Plan was an election stunt."

The same paper writes again :

" Paradoxical as the statement may sound, the breakdown of the Simla Conference was both expected and unexpected. So far as the primary and principal cause of the breakdown, the unbending attitude of Mr. Jinnah and his League is concerned, it was fully expected by all competent judges. Inconsistent as Mr. Jinnah has been in so many other things, it is impossible to deny that he has consistently adhered to this attitude during the last four years ; and there was no reasonable ground for the expectation that he would depart from it on the present crucial occasion. If in spite of this the public, or at any rate, large sections of it did not expect the breakdown, it was because they hoped, as they had, indeed, every reason for hoping, that the uncompromising attitude of one single party, and that party representing but a section though undoubtedly

a very important section, of one single community, even though that community was the second largest in India, would not prevent a settlement desired by all other sections of the people, including large sections of the Moslem community itself, as well as by the British Government, being reached.

* * * *

“ The question has rightly been asked why Lord Wavell, who was far too shrewd—and experienced a man of affairs not to have anticipated the contingency, that arose in this case, at least as a possibility, should have wasted so much of his own time and energy, and those of other important persons, some of them as busy as himself, in carrying on negotiations for a settlement, if he was not prepared to take any forward step in the event of the possibility being actualised. If it was, indeed, the intention of the Viceroy not to proceed with his plan unless Mr. Jinnah was agreeable to it, then the only right course for His Excellency, as so many responsible persons have told him in one way or another during the last four days, would have been to discuss his plan, in the first instance, with only one person Mr. Jinnah, and to give it up finally and unreservedly if he found that it was not acceptable to him. Such an attitude on his part would undoubtedly have constituted Mr. Jinnah the sole arbiter of the situation in India and, indeed, of India’s political and constitutional destiny, a position which no person with the slightest pretensions to a sense of responsibility would lightly assume for himself and which no Government with the slightest regard for democracy or for justice and fairness would lightly confer on any individual. But is not this the very position which the Viceroy has virtually conferred on Mr. Jinnah by his actual proceedings in this case and which Mr. Jinnah himself has tacitly accepted ?

* * * *

“ The Viceroy's own concluding speech at the conference shows that it was Mr. Jinnah's 'No' that finally decided the issue, not merely so far as his own co-operation and that of the League with the British Government and the rest of India in the formation of an interim Government was concerned, but as to whether there was any interim Government at all in accordance with the plan unfolded by the Viceroy first in his broadcast and then in his opening speech at the conference. Do not the entire proceedings in this case, Lord Wavell's lengthy visit to England and the pains that he took to win unwilling or wavering members of the cabinet over to his side, his broadcast speech immediately after his return to India, his invitations to Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President to the Simla Conference, preceded by the release of the members of the Congress Working Committee, his invitations to the leaders of other parties and communities, his correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi and Congress President, the elaborate arrangements made by him or under his orders for the comfort and convenience of the invitees generally and Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President in particular, and the earnestness and assiduity with which he addressed himself to the task of making the conference a success, assume the character of a huge *tamasha* in the light of what actually happened in the end ? Would not His Excellency have saved himself and the invitees all the trouble that they respectively took to make the conference a success, if he had had half an hour's talk with Mr. Jinnah before he took the first step towards the formulation and execution of his plan ? ”

But in order to have a fuller idea of the breakdown of negotiations, we must turn to Jinnah-Wavell correspondence, which tells us what this arch-separatist thought.

Secretary to the Viceroy writes to Jinnah :

Simla,

June 29th, 1945.

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

The following is the action which His Excellency would like you to take, if, after consultation with your Working Committee, you are able to accept the suggestion he made at this morning's meeting of the conference :

(1) To prepare and send him a list giving the names of members of the Moslem League who in your opinion could suitably be included in the proposed Executive Council. The number of names in this list should be not less than eight or more than twelve.

(2) If you think you can usefully suggest for possible inclusion in the Executive Council the names of persons of any community who are not members of the Moslem League you are at liberty to add them to your list, keeping them distinct from the names of Moslem League members. His Excellency hopes he made it clear this morning that this is entirely optional.

His Excellency's intention is to scrutinise the lists sent to him and to see whether from them and possibly from additional names of his own, he can, on paper form an Executive Council likely to be acceptable to the parties and to His Majesty's Government. If so, he will consult leaders, including yourself, and thereafter decide whether it is worth while making definite proposals to the conference.

Reply

Simla,

July 7th, 1945.

Dear Lord Wavell,

I placed before my Working Committee the suggestion made by Your Excellency at the last meeting of the conference and communicated to me by your Private Sec-

retary in his letter dated the 29th June, 1945. The Working Committee after careful consideration desire me to convey to you their views which are :

(1) With regard to your suggestion for submitting a panel of names of the members of the Moslem League for inclusion in the proposed Executive Council the Working Committee desires to point out that when a similar proposal was made by Your Excellency's predecessor, Lord Linlithgow, in connection with his offer of August, 1940, the Working Committee opposed it and when its objections were brought to the notice of Lord Linlithgow he dropped the proposal and suggested another alternative in his letter dated 25th of September, 1940, addressed to the President of the All-India Moslem League an extract from which is given below :

" I appreciate, however, the difficulties which, you made clear to me, confronted you in connection with the formulation of the panel which I had earlier suggested to you, and in the light of our discussion I am content with the selection of representatives, while resting with the Governor-General should be based in the case of the Moslem League (and, should they so desire, of the other parties to be represented in my council) not on a panel formally submitted but on confidential discussion between the leader of the party concerned and myself. "

This alternative was acceptable to the Moslem League. The Working Committee is of the opinion that the procedure settled on the previous occasion should be followed in the present case so far as the Moslem League is concerned.

(2) Further the Working Committee is emphatically of the opinion that all the Moslem members of the proposed Executive Council should be chosen from the Moslem League, subject to a confidential discussion between Your Excellency and the President of the

Moslem League before they are finally recommended by you to the Crown for appointment.

The Working Committee feels very strongly on this point and regards it as one of the fundamental principles.

(3) Besides the foregoing certain other points were also discussed in the Working Committee, particularly the question of providing an effective safeguard against unfair decisions of the majority. While the Committee appreciated the remarks in the statement of the Secretary of State in the House of Commons that the power of veto will be exercised by the Viceroy to protect the minority interests, it was felt that some effective safeguard would be necessary in the interest of smooth working of the interim arrangement. It was, however, thought that this question could be settled after the strength and the composition of the Executive Council was decided upon.

I have given in the above paragraphs the unanimous opinion of my Working Committee and I am ready and willing if you so desire to meet you and explain the reasons and the grounds for the decision arrived at by the Working Committee.

Secretary to the Viceroy again writes to Jinnah :

Simla,
July 9th, 1945.

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

His Excellency asks me to thank you for your letter of July 7 and to say that he will be glad to see you at 4 p.m. this afternoon, or later this afternoon if that is more convenient to you. Perhaps you would be kind enough to ask your secretary to ring me up and confirm the time.

Viceroy to Jinnah

Simla,
July 9th, 1945.

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

At the end of our talk yesterday evening, you said

that I could make your problem easier if I replied in writing to your letter of 7th July. I do not think you expect any comment now on the first and third points in that letter. Our talk was concerned mainly with the second point, "that all the Moslem members of the proposed Executive Council should be chosen from the Moslem League before they are finally recommended to the Crown for appointment."

(2) I fully appreciate your difficulties but regret that I am unable to give you the guarantee you wish, *i.e.*, that all the Moslem members of the proposed new council shall necessarily be members of the Moslem League. As I explained to you I cannot commit myself to give a similar guarantee to any other party.

I have to attempt to form an Executive Council representative, competent and generally acceptable. But, of course, I cannot compel any person or any party to co-operate in my own solution if they do not wish to do so.

It will help me greatly if you will let me have names from the Moslem League and I sincerely hope you will do so. I asked for eight, but will certainly accept five if you do not wish to send more. You can consider later whether any solution I put forward is acceptable to you.

(3) During the next two or three years decisions of great importance will have to be taken by the Government of India whatever its composition may be. These decisions—on demobilisation, economic development, taxation, trade and so on—cannot wait and it is the hope of His Majesty's Government that the Executive Council responsible for them will be one in which the major political parties are represented. It will be, of course, my principal duty to see fairplay between all parties not only in the composition of the proposed council but in its working.

(4) I need the active help of your colleagues and yourself and I am sure you will give it to me.

I have no objection to your showing this letter to your colleagues but it is not intended for publication.

Reply

Simla,

July 9th, 1945.

Dear Lord Wavell,

I thank you for your letter of the 9th July which I placed before my Working Committee. The Committee after giving its very careful consideration to the matter, desire me to state that it regrets very much to note that Your Excellency is not able to give the assurance that all the Moslem members of the proposed Executive Council will be selected from the Moslem League. In my letter of the 7th July, I mentioned that the committee considers this as one of the fundamental principles, and in the circumstances, I regret, I am not in a position to send the names on behalf of the Moslem League for inclusion in the proposed Executive Council, as desired by you.

I should like to assure Your Excellency that it has been the earnest desire of the committee and myself to assist you in every reasonable way but it is not possible for us to depart from our fundamental principles.

I need not, therefore, at present say anything more with regard to the other points raised.

Secretary to the Viceroy's concluding letter to Jinnah

Simla,

July 10th, 1945.

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

His Excellency asks me to thank you for your letter of 9th July. He will have to take two or three days to consider the position and will write to you when he has decided what to do.

VIII

ELECTION STUNT

Ausen politik (foreign politics) does sometimes prove to be a governing factor in the election policy of the political parties of a country. Sometimes the country is near as in case of Pitt Earl of Catham, and Charles James Fox who fought elections in order to frame a policy towards France in matter of *Guerra e Paix* (war and peace); while sometimes it is far, as the country of the Boers, which was the main issue between Liberals and Conservatives and Labour in election of 1901.

Some such signs about India having been made a bone of contention between major contending parties in Britain can be provided by Jinnah-Amery alliance referred to by the *Associated Press of America* according to which the Congressmen in London believed that Jinnah's insistence on his being given the right to fill all the Moslem seats in the Viceroy's Executive Council was based on hopes of a Conservative victory which would return Amery to the India Office. Those Congressmen repeated the charge that Mr. Amery was supporting Mr. Jinnah to break the Congress as an all-India political party and reduce it to a merely Hindu organisation. There is no other instance in history of one man being picked out of four hundred million people and empowered to make or mar their future. Messrs. Churchill and Amery had ordained that if Jinnah said, 'let there be progress,' there would be progress otherwise things would remain where they were. Could not the Tory Government go ahead, particularly when all political bodies, including national Moslem organisa-

tions, which dominated the situation in almost all Moslem majority provinces were prepared to co-operate with it? If it does not care for the Hindu Mahasabha, why does it care for the Moslem League? It should not complain, if the belief grows that it has been using Mr. Jinnah as a willing tool to destroy the Indian National Congress, which represented the vast unity-loving and liberty-loving Indian elements and which had been a thorn in the side of British imperialism, and convert India into a camp of warring communities.

But if it was an issue of fight between two contending parties in Britain, why should an Indian Viceroy be made to bear the onus of the responsibility of failure? Mr. Rajagopalachariar was of the opinion that Lord Wavell took blame under orders. He denied that Lord Wavell or His Majesty's Government rejected Jinnah's claim. On the other hand, he said, they had acquiesced in the claim. Declaring that he would not sacrifice clarity for the sake of politeness, Mr. Rajagopalachariar said: "It was the privilege of a soldier to say 'my effort has failed.' A civilian would not say that. When Lord Wavell declares that the conference was a failure and that it was his failure, some people at the conference immediately expressed that he was not to be blamed at all. These same people have now been trying to find out reasons for declaring that the conference was no failure at all. Whether Lord Wavell or Mr. Amery or His Majesty's Government whoever was responsible, the conference is now hanging in the air. But at the same time it should not be forgotten that they at the conference were not an indisciplined and disorganised crowd. They acted in concert. Of course, individual influences and convictions played their part, but Governments were not in the habit of giving their agents powers beyond a certain limit in such important matters. So one could always be sure that if it was Lord Wavell's blame, he had undertaken it according to orders.

“ ‘ It is your (the Viceroy’s) fault because you do not have sufficient powers to convert him (Mr. Jinnah). It is not the fault of a man who is convinced because he is true to his conviction and if you failed to persuade him it is your fault.’ In that way Lord Wavell took the blame on himself.”

Dealing with Mr. Jinnah’s claim and the Viceroy’s stand, Mr. Rajagopalachariar said : “ Mr. Jinnah claimed that his League should recommend nominees for the Moslem quota for acceptance by the British Government. Mr. Jinnah’s claim was not accepted by the Viceroy either in the beginning or in the course of the conversations or at their end. When finally they met and Mr. Jinnah renewed his claim—do not confuse this with Pakistan or anything else—Lord Wavell did not consider it proper or useful to proceed any further with the matter.”

Mr. Jinnah’s claim did not appeal even to Lord Wavell whose government’s traditional habit was that if they wanted to let Mr. Jinnah down they let him down gently and if any condemnation was necessary they did it in very restrained language. Mr. Jinnah’s demand was considered to be not feasible and untenable and Mr. Rajagopalachariar asked : “ Why did not the Viceroy consider it necessary to make any further investigation in the matter by consulting the conference ? The issue was important inasmuch as the Wavell proposals were placed before the country not as the result of any agitation in the land but because of Lord Wavell’s own conviction. His Majesty’s Government had ratified his plan. If he was so convinced that Mr. Jinnah’s claim was wrong and told him so straightway without consulting anybody else then he also had it in his power to carry on in spite of Mr. Jinnah’s refusal.”

“ You must have,” Mr. Rajagopalachariar said, “ the courage of conviction. If you do not have the

courage of your convictions then it is better not to hold principles at all. If Mr. Jinnah's claim is rejected it would be nothing more than intellectual satisfaction to arm-chair politicians unless you follow it up with necessary actions. The present Executive Council you have condemned by asking for a new Executive Council. And, therefore, you convened this conference. If you say that Mr. Jinnah is obdurate the meaning is that you have allowed Mr. Jinnah to have veto over the Government of India and you have acquiesced in his claim."

Mr. Rajagopalachariar said that Mr. Jinnah's claim had been conceded to the extent of making it effective in barring all progress. It should be realised, he said, that a wrong claim could not be sustained long.

To the question "what next" Mr. Rajagopalachariar replied that there was lot of difference between a right thing and doing that right thing. What the British Government required was courage more than anything else. What was admitted to be an unreasonable demand could not be conceded and he hoped the British Government, who had defeated Germany, Italy and would defeat Japan shortly, would not confess defeat at the hands of Mr. Jinnah."

Mr. Rajagopalachariar, as a way out, suggested two alternatives. The first was "bypassing" the League. The second alternative was to give effect to the British declaration of 1942. His Majesty's Government had stated *ad nauseam* that the offer stands and they were committed to it and since it was not possible to make all people agree, it would be better to allow such of those provinces who would like to join the Indian union to proceed with the task of framing a constitution.

While Rajagopalachariar had narrated the difficulties of a British representative and *de-jure* head of Indian administration at a time, when the election was at home, Sir Frederick James, who was the chairman of the meeting

where C. Rajagopalachariar spoke, had done a bit of propaganda on behalf of the Tories, and meant for the consumption of the British electorate new in India. In the following news issued by the *Reuter* another suggestion was made in Britain at the time, but since it has not been acted upon, it should be treated as an election fib.

The *Daily Sketch* recalling that Lord Wavell had taken the responsibility for the breakdown writes : " On the contrary the immediate cause of the failure of negotiations seemingly ought to be laid at the door of Mr. Jinnah."

The diplomatic correspondent of the *Daily Herald* writes : " Lord Wavell in consultation with the Government in London is considering two possible new steps—firstly, the formation of a new Central Government filling five Moslem seats by the Viceroy's own nominees, with an intimation to the Congress and the Moslem League that they can appoint their own men as soon as they can agree. Secondly, the retention of the present system for the time being, in the hope that a realisation of what they have lost will bring the two bodies to think seriously whether it is worth losing for the sake of a disagreement as to which shall nominate a single minister."

He adds that the immediate cause of the breakdown is only a symptom of a deeper division over the Moslem League claim for partition and the Congress objective of a single indivisible India.

The tragic fact is that it seems beyond ingenuity at the moment to devise a method of persuading the two great factions to co-operate in self-government.

But though this aspect of electioneering stunt needed to be considered *vis-a-vis* the Wavell Plan it was not the only angle from which the plan could be discussed (having proved a failure). Other views were expressed on the subject from various other angles.

IX

CYNOSURE OF ALL EYES

Lord Wavell's announcement that the Simla Conference for Indianisation of the Viceroy's Executive Council had failed was received with widespread regret in London political quarters. The failure was widely commented on by the British Press and rivalled the Potsdam Conference in prominence. Most papers agreed in placing the chief responsibility on Mr. Jinnah and the Moslem League for the breakdown, but on all sides the view was expressed that this setback would not affect British determination to secure a satisfactory settlement. Below we quote certain comments and views of the press and individuals which we are sure will be of reference and interest to the readers :

We are in no position to be impatient with any country whose major parties cannot agree to form a coalition, but the breakdown of Viceroy's efforts would be so damaging that it must be asked whether the Moslem veto can be allowed to stand. At the time of the Cripps offer Mr. Churchill referred to alternative dangers either that the resistance of a powerful minority might impose an indefinite veto upon the wishes of the majority or that a majority decision might be taken which would be resisted to a point destructive to internal harmony and fatal to the setting up of a new constitution. With every sympathy for the anxiety of Moslem League, one cannot fail to see that we shall sooner or later have to tackle that veto.—*The Manchester Guardian*

There will be much disappointment both in India and in this country at the failure of yet another attempt

to bring India nearer to self-government. Had it been possible as the Viceroy proposed to form a new Central Government on which the chief Indian parties were represented, the subsequent experience of working together might well have produced a genuine communal agreement on future India. But that hope has not been realised and the difficult Indian problem is little, if anything, nearer solution.

The communal struggle for power as revealed in Mr. Jinnah's obduracy has again checked Indian political progress. This does not mean indeed that the British Government can relax its efforts to achieve a settlement, but it shows how far Indian parties still are from achieving a measure of agreement among themselves that is necessary for self-government.

—The Liverpool Daily Post

There will be natural disposition, in spite of Lord Wavell's counsel, to place the blame for the failure on Mr. Jinnah and the Moslem League. The part of wisdom is rather to understand the grounds of their attitude which derives from long-standing uneasiness for the fate of the Moslem community under any system of government by an arithmetical majority such as seems at present to be postulated by the Congress for the democratic India of the future.

No useful purpose would be served by denying the reality of these fears. It is in any event clear that until it is possible to allay the apprehensions of that influential body of Moslem opinion for which the League, even by the admission of its opponents must be deemed to stand. There will be no prospect of accommodation between the Congress and the League. The task will not be easy. But it is the indispensable foundation for the future progress of India. The statesmanship now required of the Congress Party by the course of events should not be beyond the range of the leaders who have

gone so far to make the conference a success. They have agreed to co-operate in a reformed Government on the terms suggested, including full participation in the war effort, in the same cordial spirit in which it was put forward, frankly recognising it as a "new deal" requiring a wholly fresh attitude on their own part.

They would be more than human if they did not resent what must appear to them as a rejection of the preferred co-operation at a mere dictate of the League. They will be tempted to ask why the Viceroy, with nominees of all the parties save the Moslem League at his disposal, did not proceed to construct his new Government from a material so representative. The conclusive answer to this question is that an imposed settlement of such a kind would violate the assurances accepted by the conference as the basis of its terms of reference. It would not have assembled unless its members had known that its purpose was to assist India to arrive at an agreement rather than to pave the way for another act of state on the part of Britain. To override the apprehensions of the League with the support of the Congress and of the minorities would have been both morally indefensible and politically inexpedient.—*The Times*

On previous occasions the cause of the deadlock has been the ancient hostility between the Moslem and the Hindu. Though the Viceroy laboured tirelessly to produce a more accommodating spirit, Mr. Jinnah would not agree even to submit a list of names unless the exclusive right of the Moslem League to speak for the Moslems was accepted in advance.

With the progress of Allied operations in the Far East, it should be possible before very long to hold elections in India. Whatever their results may be, as long as there exists among Indian leaders the same spirit of narrow sectarianism which frustrated Lord Wavell's attempt at settlement, so long will the realisation of

Dominion Status in India be held up.

Mr. Gandhi wrecked the Cripps proposals and Simla was Mr. Jinnah's turn. As the leader of the Moslem League he duly wrecked the Wavell proposals. Once again the terrible jealousies and mistrust which divide the Indian political parties have ruined a promising scheme. The world has witnessed a deplorable exhibition of political irresponsibility.

Further attempts will be made to secure an agreement, for the British are indefatigable when it comes to securing their own abdication from power in India. But we are still entrusted with the destinies of a vast mass of Indians so magnificently represented by their fighting armies. That is a responsibility we can never lay down until we are assured that they will receive fair dealing and good Government from their own people.

—*The Daily Telegraph*

The responsibility for the failure of Simla Conference was not Lord Wavell's. It was Mr. Jinnah's and Mr. Jinnah's alone. The Moslem League is no more completely representative of Moslem India than the Congress is completely representative of Hindu India. It is more than probable that if Mr. Jinnah had been concerned only with the technical issue the conference would not have broken down. The real issue at stake was the whole future of Pakistan. —*The News Chronicle*

The collapse of the talks has caused acute disappointment in left circles in Great Britain and if the responsibility primarily rests upon the Mohammedan representatives, then it is indeed a very grave decision that they have taken. It will have the effect of estranging the socialists' sympathy in Britain for Mohammedan claims for many places.

I understand that Lord Wavell has accepted the responsibility for the breakdown of the talks. If that means anything at all, it should mean that he still has

hope that a resumption in the near future might have a better result. In the meantime, however, it is necessary for us to make our attitude towards the Mohammedan representatives perfectly clear. We expect that they should be ready to subordinate their own denominationalists' claim so as to secure a proper settlement of the Indian constitutional problem. It is not possible for us to go on resisting the majority claims of the Hindus if every hope of a settlement is going to be spoiled and destroyed by the aggressive assumption of minority claims by the Mohammedans.—*Mr. Bevin, the Left-Wing Leader of the British Labour Party*

As one who had a hand in the preparation of the policy put forward by Lord Wavell, I am very much disappointed that his efforts have failed. The present situation is not merely the failure of an attempt to move towards more self-government for India ; it is a threat to the position of India after the war. Unless the problem of unity in the interests of self-government in India is settled before the end of the Japanese war, there is bound to be serious friction between different interests when the war is over. It is tragic that the negotiations have failed, but I do not think that the British Government at the time could have made a more generous offer.

It was a policy of the Coalition Government and of the Caretaker Government to make a success of the Simla negotiations. There is one thing that I regret and it is that it was not possible to delay the announcement that the talks had failed until after the result of the general election. The new Cabinet for better or for worse is going to play an important part in any future negotiations for further Indianisation of the Viceroy's Council.

—*Lord Listowell, the late Under-Secretary for India*

It was characteristic of Lord Wavell to take on himself the responsibility for the breakdown, but I do not think that the public either at home or abroad will feel

that the responsibility lies with him. I am one of the many in this country who have always supported the Moslem claim, but I do not feel that it has been strengthened by the attitude of the Moslem League on this occasion which seems to have been entirely lacking in the spirit of accommodation.

As in science so in politics we have to explore many blind alleys before arriving at an open road. I do not regard this matter as having been closed and I have every hope that Lord Wavell will see his way clear to renew the discussions on some future occasion and afford another opportunity for arriving at a decision.—*Lord Hailey*

I am very distressed to hear of the breakdown in the negotiations and have great sympathy with all those, especially Lord Wavell who tried so hard to bring them to a successful conclusion.

The obvious cause of the breakdown is not so much the constitution of the interim Government as the influence any temporary arrangement is likely to have upon more permanent decisions which will have to be made for the full and free self-government of India. Behind the demand of the Moslem League that they alone should represent the Mussulmans of India is the fear of Hindu domination and the Moslems becoming a perpetual political minority. It would not seem possible to get any agreement on a temporary measure of advance as was suggested by Lord Wavell, since the Moslem League feels compelled to insist upon their acceptance as the sole representative of Moslem opinion in India in the light of the fact that no agreement has yet been arrived at upon the Pakistan issue.

In view of the pledge given by the Viceroy and the Government that the scheme for new Executive would not be forced through in the face of opposition of any of the major communities, it is obviously impossible for him to proceed with the formation of new Government.

One thing essential is that we should not slip back again into a sense of frustration and inability to achieve any advance. That certainly would be the worst possible result. For that reason I am very glad to hear of the Viceroy's excellent statement at the concluding session of the conference.

We should, I believe, have decided to skip the temporary re-adjustment of the Central Government which has become impossible owing to the view and fear of the Moslem League and go straight ahead with a permanent solution.

The Japanese have now been driven far enough back from India for it to be possible to hold new elections and should as soon as they are completed, a constituent assembly be set up either on the basis put forward in the British Government's proposals of 1942 or on any other basis that could be agreed between the major parties. Knowledge that a constituent assembly would be formed out of those elected would make the question as to the future constitution the major issue of election. It would be all to the good.

If this be so, then it is obviously desirable not to waste further time trying to arrive at a temporary arrangement, which is mixed up inexplicably with the problems of permanent settlement especially with that of the unity of British India. It is far better to expedite means of arriving at a permanent settlement in which the question of Pakistan must form a major issue.

It would not be right to allow any minority, however large and important, to hold up the attainment of self-government in India, any more than it would be right to force the Moslem majority provinces into a new institutional arrangement to which they took fundamental objection.—*Sir Stafford Cripps*.

Had it not been for the insistence of Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah that the Moslem League was the sole represen-

tative of the Moslems in India, the whole position would have been different. I think the Congress has come out of this fairly and squarely. The Moslem League policy at present is apparently only an obstructionist policy.

Out of the Simla Conference has emerged a greater appreciation of the Indian problem in world opinion.

This would clarify public opinion and enable the people in Britain to become more familiar with the facts which had become rather obscure.

—*Mr. Reginald Sorensen, former Labour Member of the Parliament*

X

WHAT NEXT ?

The negotiations having gone the way of the previous Round Table Conferences it was being asked as to what would be the next answer. The Congress has said that it wants elections. The League has said the same. These are now being held. But the main slogan of the elections should be among others the release of the political prisoners. To this end the Congress has the opinion of influential circles of the press behind it, as the one penned below :

"The Congress, as Pandit Nehru has pointed out, would welcome the elections. But before they are held members of the Congress still in detention or in jail must be released and the ban on the Congress organisations, including the A.I.C.C. must be lifted. What the Congress demands is fair and free elections. Such elections cannot be held unless the civil liberties are restored and political parties and organisations are free to carry on their normal activities. It appears from Maulana Azad's statement that he has been in correspondence with the Viceroy on these questions and that he expects that the Viceroy would make a gesture by acceding to the Congress Working Committee's demands.* The immediate task before the Congress leaders is, therefore, to press this demand and instruct public opinion on what the Congress's next step should be."

* A recent press message says that Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, when asked by the special representative of the *United Press of India* on September 19 last at Poona, said : " I have not received any communication from the Viceroy about the release of the politicals. I have written to the Governor of Bengal also in addition to the Viceroy on the subject of the release of politicals."

The elections having been held the country is to demand a representative government at the centre. Various opinions are expressed on the subject. Sir Stafford Cripps (now President of the Board of Trade) has said (for all it is worth) that any attempt to construct a representative government at the centre was in those circumstances bound to fail. He says that a Constituent Assembly should be convened to frame the constitution of India as laid down in the Cripps offer (crux of the whole proposal).

Sir Stafford points out that so long as the League was allowed to occupy a position in the political discussions which enabled it to veto any agreed solution ; so long the *status quo* of stalemate would remain in India. This was a sound position which Cripps took up, but much water has run under the brooks since the Cripps proposal was first mooted. Gandhiji's "Quit India" campaign makes all the difference. It was, as has been elsewhere observed by the writer, started not out of malice or hatred of the British. Pandit Nehru has now reverted to the subject in course of (now famous) interview with the *Daily Worker* correspondent.

Nehru pointed out that the third party should retire from the scene either "actually" or "theoretically" and allow other parties to realise that they had to face the consequences of a deadlock. Those who have no idea of the complexity of the problem created by alien rule for about two centuries may get naturally confused and puzzled. What, they may wonder, does Pandit Nehru mean by 'actual' or 'theoretical' withdrawal of the third party ? The meaning is, however, clear. If the British ruling class, as it so often points out, feels that it cannot retire from the scene only because the Pacific War is not at an end, Pandit Nehru has offered an alternative. That alternative is its 'theoretical' withdrawal. It means that subject to certain specified reservations which may

be called for by the exigencies of war, the internal political and administrative arrangements should be left to be determined by the Indian political parties without any British intervention whatsoever. The arrangements can be made by agreement or, failing agreement, by a majority decision or expert international arbitration. The British ruling class must have no place in this scheme. That, we think, is what Pandit Nehru means by "theoretical" withdrawal. "Actually" it will be in power for the duration in respect of the strategic and operational control of the armed forces and the conduct of war. Beyond these defined objectives, it will be out of the picture.

This scheme of things as envisaged by Jawaharlal Nehru had twofold results. It was (firstly) believed that the third party sought to drive the two communities in India called the Hindus and the Moslems wide apart, and favoured retention of its own control.

Secondly, as a prominent Indian paper pointed out the psychological effect of the British part in the Nehru's scheme of things was that it tended to encourage inertia and disinterestedness in the *leit motif* of the Congress, *viz.*, the achievement of freedom. The political parties tended to believe that even as they walked dreamily something unexpected might happen round the corner. The same paper pursuing the above psychological analysis further says that it was not of much use to blame the Indian parties. The blame rested with the British. They made one move and then withdrew it, or tampered with it from behind the scenes.

They would either bolster up certain internal claims to encourage division or they would fall back upon the doctrine of trusteeship. They ask Hindus, Moslems and others to reach an agreed solution, but pull strings from behind the scene to see that no such agreement is secured. If, however, agreement almost becomes an accomplished fact they proclaim that they have certain irrevocable obligations which

they must maintain, agreement or no agreement. We need not go back to Morley-Minto reforms and the motives that inspired them. We need not recall the circumstances that led to the failure of the Cripps mission. They are much too well known. Take the Wavell Plan. It failed because it was intended not to succeed by those of its authors who are still in office in London. They knew Mr. Jinnah's case. They knew the Congress stand too. Knowing all this they made it a condition that either Mr. Jinnah must agree or the whole plan falls through. That was investing Mr. Jinnah with the power of veto. That was not the way of honest or sensible politicians. That was not the way of democracy. It was obstructionist tactics pure and simple. If these tactics are followed, we can tell all concerned that there would be no settlement. Of that, however, India need not be ashamed because in no country in a world would there be any settlement in similar circumstances.

What one asks is the way out from such a plan? That answer was furnished by a prominent Indian journalist who wrote:

"The way out is the withdrawal of the British ruling class. Either Mr. Jinnah and the Moslem League enjoy the confidence of the entire Moslem community or they do not. If the Moslem community is with and behind them, they should have no cause for fear in the event of the third party withdrawing from the scene. A community of 90 million sturdy, virile and politically conscious Moslems cannot be coerced into submission to an order of things which it dislikes and hates. In any case, the British cannot give it protection permanently or for any length of time. If, on the contrary, Mr. Jinnah and the Moslem League do not represent the entire Moslem community they must bow to the will of the majority of their co-religionists. There is no warrant for British intervention. There is no

case for continuance of British domination. Ultimately the solution of the vast and complicated Indian problem lies in the British quitting the scene peacefully and without an Indo-British conflict. Meanwhile and so long as that way is not available, all that India's patriotic men and women can do is to mobilise public opinion in support of patriotic and world causes and in this and other ways strive to bring the Indian question within the purview of the world's enlightened and progressive statesmanship. Left to themselves the British ruling class would never find a way out. An acquisitive class does not willingly sign its death warrant."

Since the above was written the elections are being held, though the Congress demand for the theoretical withdrawal of the British also stands. What would be the upshot of the elections. The Congress it was said would not accept offices. It was also said that it would not accept offices in provinces, other than those which are under section 93 rule.

Does the above (any of the above) plank of the Congress programme stand? This is what the country wants to know. Misgivings about this position which have been expressed are reflected in the following comment:

"Both the Congress President and some other Congress leaders have said more than once during the last few days that they are not in favour of the acceptance of office by the Congress in the section 93 provinces until a settlement is reached with regard to the Central Government. In his latest statement on the subject Maulana Azad said that in the absence of a popular government at the centre 'no good purpose would be served by accepting office in those provinces.' We confess we are not able to understand the position of the Congress in this matter. The Congress

has accepted office in one province already, and in another province the leader of the Congress Party in the Legislature has been authorised to accept office should he consider it necessary and right to do so. If the acceptance of office does serve a good purpose in these provinces, with what plausibility can any one maintain that it will not serve an equally good purpose in the section 93 provinces? If anything, the chances of a good purpose being served by the acceptance of office by the Congress are much greater in the section 93 provinces, in all of which the Congress has not only an absolute majority in the Legislature, but in several cases an overwhelming majority, than either in the Frontier Province or in Assam, in neither of which is the position of the Congress Party so strong and impregnable as in Madras and some other provinces for instance. If the essential purpose of the acceptance of office by a popular party like the Congress is to carry on the administration according to the will of the people, then clearly the Congress is in at least as good a position to fulfil that purpose by accepting office in the section 93 provinces, as in the Frontier Province or Assam."

Further it was pointed out that the situation in the country was of such a nature that the acceptance of offices by the Congressmen everywhere was desirable. Famines ravaged the surface of the land. Food prices continued to soar very high. Cloth was scarce, and could not be had.

These circles have also pointed out that there were misgivings because it was known that the Congress has given up offices as a protest against the war policy of the Government.

And having done that the above commentator tries to wriggle out of the position by supplying himself the answer to the Congress conundrum :

" The withdrawal of the ministries at a later stage was—due to exceptional circumstances, and the exception here as elsewhere only proved the rule. After all, there were three main parties whose verdict on the work of the ministries must decide the issue, the Congress itself, the Governors and the people, and all three of them, as everyone knows, expressed satisfaction with the work done by the ministries.

" Even the exceptional circumstances under which the Congress withdrew its ministries from the Congress majority provinces can no longer be urged as a sufficient justification for the continuance of the withdrawal. It was as a gesture of protest that the Congress took the action it did, and the protest has served its purpose. Today there is far better mutual understanding between the Congress and the Government than what existed at the time, and the Congress after having made its token protest against the war policy of the British Government has its effect acquiesced in it. Mahatma Gandhi, in his famous offer to the British Government, expressed his readiness to leave the actual conduct of the war in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief and the Viceroy, and the whole basis of the negotiations which led to the Simla Conference was the acceptance by the Congress and all other parties in India of the view of the British Government that the war against Japan must be conducted with the full weight of the National Government's authority and with all its resources, material and moral, and that the Commander-in-Chief should be in supreme charge of the operations. Further the only Congress leader, who holds the office of Premier of a province today, has publicly declared, without a 'single dissentient voice being raised in any quarter, that the acceptance of office in the present conditions necessarily means and implies readiness to support the war effort.

There cannot consequently be the slightest justification for treating the war policy of the British Government as a reasonable ground for the continued withdrawal of the Congress ministries.

"As a matter of fact not only is there no reasonable ground for continuing the withdrawal, but there is the strongest possible ground for abandoning the present policy and reverting to the older policy of office acceptance."

Dr. Khan Sahib may or may not have made the above remark, but how on earth does his saying that change the *de facto* attitude of the Frontier Congressmen, Frontier people or even the Frontier ministries in part. Since they are the Governor's and the King's ministers, *de jure* and *de facto* they are associated with the war policy, because they enjoy the confidence of the Governor and the King. But they have to face another problem in this matter, and they cannot forget that the people of India, and the general body of the Congress has not made its position clear in this matter. Only the elections and the subsequent thrashing out of the question *de novo* can do that. Enjoying of the Governor's confidence and functioning in office is not the same thing as enjoying the people's confidence or that of the general body of the Congressmen. This is not to say that they would be branded as dissentients or that in fact they are. Their position gives rise to a confusion which is inherent in the situation. They are doing acts of public weal, but it remains to be seen, whether the country and the Congress want them to do that.

Nebru's interview about the "Quit India" solves the conundrum. Very likely the Congress would adhere to this position, with certain modifications after the election. And very likely it would have a majority unprecedented in its own history which would give it

sound bargaining position. Since then however Wavell has in his speech dotted the i's and crossed the t's of the political speeches of the President of the Board of the Trade. He wants a Constituent Assembly and he wants modified, expanded Viceroy's Council.

But he is not frank. Given goodwill, the biographer of Allenby could enrich the Indian political world with his experience in Egypt, India and Palestine. He need not be afraid of the Tory Party. The Tories are no longer in power.

The British are fast modifying their attitude in the coastal regions of East Mediterranean. They could do that in the interior regions of East Mediterranean, of East Pacific and North Indian Ocean—of India itself.

Thus for the present the position is in a state of flux, and till the elections are over, nothing definite could be said on the subject.

APPENDIX

MAHATMA GANDHI

Mahatma Gandhi, the unchallenged leader of Nationalist India and idol of the people, is a stoic denouncer of modern life and civilisation, much in the line of Count Tolstoy. Born on 2nd October, 1869 : educated at Rajkot and London. Started practice as Bar-at-Law in South Africa. Helped Government during Boer War, Zulu Rebellion and the last Great War. Returning from Africa set up practice in Bombay which he soon gave up. Started satyagraha campaign in 1918, non-co-operation movement in 1920 ; helped the Ali Brothers in their Khilafat agitation. Was jailed in 1922, but released in 1924. Became a prominent Congressman, whose words became law with millions of Indians. Broke the salt laws in 1930. Was President, Indian National Congress, 1924. Interned in 1930, released after a few months. Went to Round Table Conference in 1931. Irwin-Gandhi Pact of truce signed in 1931. Again jailed in 1932 ; released next year. Over Rajkot affairs took a fast unto death. Vow at Rajkot, 1939, Matter compromised by the Chief Justice of India. Started fresh satyagraha campaign at the later end of 1940. Is the virtual dictator of the Congress, has refused help to Government in present war, unless its terms are accepted. Has started a campaign in favour of the Harijans for their social and religious uplift. Supports Wardha scheme of education. Has temporarily stopped his *Harijan* and other papers, owing to stringency of Press laws. Observes silence once a week. Is a strict vegetarian. Insists on use of khaddar and propagates his *charkha* gospel. Remaking modern India. Has written a number of books on politics and

sociology. His "Autobiography, Experiments with Truth, Young India, Indian Home Rule," etc., have gone into many editions. Address : Sevagram near Wardha, C.P.

MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the President of the Indian National Congress, was born in 1888 at Mecca, educated at "Al-Azhar" University, Cairo, in Moslem Theology. A great Moslem divine and thinker settled later in Calcutta. Started the Urdu weekly *Al-Hilal* and on its suppression by Government, the *Al-Balagh*. His activities led to his internment. Joined the nationalist movement just before the Great War; was a leading figure in Khilafat and non-co-operation movements. Has been in the Congress Working Committee. Imprisoned several times. Is President of the Congress for 1940-41, was President twice before. Is a powerful writer and an impressive speaker. Has written numerous books mainly on Moslem Theology.

MASTER TARA SINGH

Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Akali Party, has suffered imprisonment for political work. Prominent leader of the Azad Punjab movement of the Sikhs.

MR. M. A. JINNAH

Mr. M. A. Jinnah, the President of the Moslem League and the most persistent advocate of dismemberment of India and the greatest enemy of Indian unity and nationalism, was born on December 25, 1876, educated at Karachi and London. Was for some time the Private Secretary to Dadabhoi Naoroji. Was connected with the Indian National Congress but later left it and became prominently associated with the Moslem League of which he is President. Was delegate to Round Table Conference. Is member of the Indian Legislative Assembly. Practises at Bombay High Court. Address : Malabar Hill, Bombay.

MR. RAJAGOPALACHARIAR

Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar, ex-Premier, Congress Government, Madras ; Member, Congress Working Committee; born 1879; joined bar in 1900, but soon gave up his legal profession and took part in the first non-co-operation movement of the twenties ; also participated in Rowlatt Act Satyagraha Campaign ; has suffered imprisonment several times ; General Secretary, Congress, 1921-22 ; ex-President, Tamil Nadu Provincial Congress ; introduced the first prohibition legislation in India ; Secretary, Prohibition League and also member-in-charge, Anti-drink Campaign of Congress ; he encourages handloom spinning, insists on the use of khadi and is a strong supporter of the anti-untouchability movement ; an astute politician, a refined scholar, a rightist, he is one of Gandhiji's close associates ; suffered imprisonment in 1940 under Defence of India Rules.

DR. KHAN SAHIB

Dr. Khan Sahib, Congress Premier of the North-West Frontier Province, is the elder brother of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, "the Frontier Gandhi". Under the leadership of the great Khan Brothers the Frontier Province of sturdy Pathans forms the greatest bulwark against the destructive life of Pakistan. Finished his medical education in England ; was attached to an army as a commissioned officer ; joined Congress and "Red Shirts" movement ; was interned with his brother during non-co-operation movement ; was a member of the Legislative Assembly for several years.

PT. GOVINDVALLABH PANT

Pt. Govindvallabh Pant, ex-Premier, U.P. Congress Government ; leader of the Congress Party in the U.P. Assembly; born 1886; a lawyer of distinction left bar

to join Congress ; was leader of the Swaraj Party in the U.P. Legislative Council ; took active part in the Non-co-operation (1921) and Satyagraha movements, 1930 ; President, Political Conference, Aligarh, 1927 ; is a member of the Congress Working Committee ; was Deputy Leader, Central Assembly, 1934 ; General Secretary, All-India Parliamentary Board (Congress).

PT. RAVISHANKAR SHUKLA

Pandit Ravishankar Shukla, ex-Premier, C.P. Congress Government, born 1876, joined bar in 1908. Played a leading part in the non-co-operation movement and was fined and imprisoned ; entered Legislative Council as Swarajist member in 1923 ; was Minister for Education, C.P., in 1937.

MR. SHRI KRISHNA SINHA

Mr. Shri Krishna Sinha, ex-Premier of Bihar in the Congress regime, born in 1888, educated at Patna. Joined bar in 1915. Came to lead the Swaraj Party of Bihar and Orissa in 1927, after having given up practice in 1921. Was in the Central Assembly for a time, and was Chairman, Monghyr District Board. Address : Maur, Barbigha (Monghyr).

SIR GHULAM HUSSAIN HIDAYATULLAH

Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, a political wobbler, who was a Minister in the Nationalist Cabinet of Mr. Allah Bakhsh and is now Premier of the Moslem League Ministry in Sind, was born in 1879, educated at Karachi. Member, old Bombay Council, 1912 ; Minister, Bombay, 1921-28; Member, Executive Council, Bombay, 1928-34. Attended the Round Table Conference (twice). Address : Seafield Road, Karachi.

SIR MUHAMMAD SAIYID SAADULLA

Sir Muhammad Saiyid Saadulla, formerly Premier of the Moslem League Ministry, now Premier of all-party Ministry of Assam, born 1886, started career as professor ; later joined Gauhati Bar, 1909. Practised in the Calcutta High Court, 1920—24. Member, Legislative Council, Assam, 1913—20, and again since 1923. Minister, Assam Government, 1924—29 ; Member, Executive Council, Assam, in charge of Law and Order, 1929-30 ; Finance and Law Member, Assam Government, 1930—34.

MALIK KHIZAR HAYAT KHAN TIWANA

Malik Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, Premier of the Unionist Ministry of the Punjab, born in 1900, educated at Lahore, has seen service in Great War and third Afghan War, was President, National Horse Breeding Society of India : has received several medals : was Manager, Kalra Estate.

MAHARAJA OF PARLAKIMEDI

Maharaja of Parlakimedi, Captain Maharaja Sri Sri Krishna Chandra Gajapati Narayana Deo, M.L.C., born 1892, educated at Madras. A big landholder in Ganjam District Was a member of Royal Commission on Agriculture ; was a delegate to 1st Round Table Conference, gave evidence before Joint Parliamentary Committee in London. Holds Honorary Commission in the land forces of R.I.M. Is keenly interested in industrial advancement. Maintains schools and colleges, etc. Has donated large sums to public institutions. Is a big-game hunter and cricketeer.

MR. BAL GANGADHAR KHER

Mr. Bal Gangadhar Kher, LL.B., born 1888 ; educated at Bombay. Joined Bombay High Court as Solicitor, 1918. Is partner, Messrs. Manilal Kher, Ambalal and Co.,

Solicitors, Bombay. Was Secretary, Bardoli Satyagraha Enquiry Committee and of Swaraj Party. Member, A.-I.C.C. Had been in prison several times and was fined in connection with the Congress movement. Founded Bombay Legal Aid Society. Led Bombay Congress Party in the Bombay Assembly. Was Prime Minister, Bombay, 1937 - 39. Address : Char Bungalow, 14th Road, Khar, Bombay.

SIR JOHN HENRY SWAIN RICHARDSON

Sir John Henry Swain Richardson is the leader of the European Group in the Central Assembly. Is Director, Andrew Yule & Co., Ltd., Calcutta, born June 18, 1889; married Olga, daughter of George John Stavridi of Geneva and Calcutta. Leader, European Group, Legislative Assembly, Government of India. Member, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Council of State, Government of India, 1939—41 ; President, Calcutta School of Music, Associated Chambers of Commerce and Bengal Chamber of Commerce, 1940; served in the Great War 1914—19 in Mesopotamia and India with 5th Buffs and 11th Rajputs. Address : 3, Clive Row, Calcutta.

